

Walsall & Willenhall CHRONICLE

Thursday, January 12, 2017

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FITNESS ACADEMY IS RHEAN'S ROAD TO RECOVERY AFTER LOSING SON



Jenna Williams, Sianne Fellows and Rhean White

A MOTHER who lost her first child within an hour of him being born, has used her devastating loss as a force to change her life. Rhean White, aged 25, from Bloxwich, gave birth prematurely to her son Rome on October 26, with the baby's heart tragically stopping just an hour later.

It is an experience Rhean admits she will probably never recover from but rather than dwell on the tragedy she began putting all of her time and effort into her fitness academy just two days later.

Now, after just a few months, she has secured funding that will help her carry on teaching others how to become fitness instructors and her academy, called Solar Sport and Fitness Academy, has a 100 per

cent pass rate for people looking to gain their qualifications in training.

Rhean says that she had set up the academy in the months prior to her son's birth but 'never did anything with it' until he passed away.

She said: "I am quite a pro-active person and I decided I didn't want to sit around, constantly thinking about what had happened. It is something I am not quite over and I don't think I can ever really be."

"I can't explain how that day felt, it was a nightmare, but I have to put that behind me and I decided I would honour Rome's memory by doing everything for him."

"I lost him on the Wednesday and I set about taking my academy to the next level

on the Friday, since then it has been nothing but success. I still visit his grave every day to tell him the news about how I am doing, that might sound strange but it is something I have to do."

Rhean is a former teacher who says helping others realise their goals is something that drives her on and after making the switch from science and English teacher to sports coach, she believes she has found her calling. She said: "I just love helping people realise their goals and after what I went through. I can see myself doing this for a long time, it feels like the right thing to do."

The Solar Sport and Fitness Academy is based at the Change Your Shape gym in Leamore Lane.

HEALTH

Busy times ahead for hospital's A&E

ATTENDANCES at Walsall Manor Hospital's A&E department were not as high as feared at the weekend, but bosses have warned busier times could be ahead.

On Friday bosses anticipated up to 500 people would come through the doors on Saturday and Sunday.

They issued a warning that people may face long waits to be seen at the hospital's A&E unit.

However the actual number was around 20 per cent less than expected with 407 patients recorded.

There were 194 patients on Saturday and a further 213 on Sunday.

Nevertheless health chiefs have declared the next few weeks are likely to be busier than usual for the Manor.

FUNDRAISING

Hospice chosen as bank charity

ST GILES Walsall Hospice has been named Walsall TSB's Charity of the Year as part of the bank's local community partnerships project.

Introduced in 2015, the project involves TSB branches across the UK by selecting one local charity or social group, and offering them support with regular fundraising events while encouraging awareness across the area.

Fundraising for St Giles Walsall Hospice began in September and so far the Walsall branch has raised more than £700 for the leading local charity.

APPEAL

Dog's body in bin bag on rail tracks

THE body of a chihuahua was found in a bin bag on railway tracks in the Black Country. A member of the public found the dog wrapped in a black bin bag, which was within a Heron food bag.

The dog was not microchipped and had bruising on his front legs. It happened on the morning of December 28 on the old railway line off Stroud Avenue, Willenhall.

RSPCA inspector Vicki Taylor said: "There could be an entirely innocent reason as to why the dog was there, however it would be very helpful to ascertain the truth." Anyone with any information, can call 0300 123 8018.

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Burial ground fight not over despite firm pulling the plug CEMETERY PLAN SET FOR RETURN

THE fight over controversial plans for a new cemetery in Rushall is not over – despite original proposals being withdrawn.

Aldridge Construction, which owns the land in Winterley Lane, Rushall, had wanted to build a 6,450-plot burial ground. The plans had caused outrage among residents but the firm pushed ahead, insisting the natural burial ground would be 'unique' and was needed. The company submitted the plans in July last year.

However, they have now been withdrawn. Cemetery Development Services, based in Bedford, which is acting as the planning agent on behalf of Aldridge Construction, conceded that parts of the plans 'needed strengthening', which was the reason behind the withdrawal.

Ruth Meeke, who farms on land next to the proposed cemetery and is against the plans, said: "Me and my sister Jane welcome the decision to withdraw plans for the proposed natural burial site on Winterley Lane."

"We believe natural burial sites in the right place can be beautiful peaceful places – Winterley Lane, due to the geology, not being suitable."

Ms Meeke also listed reasons as to why any new proposal should be rejected by Walsall Council. These included the width of the lane making it unable to sustain additional traffic and contamination risks due to the canal running alongside the site.

However, Cemetery Development Services has confirmed that new plans for the burial ground will be resubmitted.

Justin Smith, the managing di-

Report by Jack Avery

rector of the firm, said: "The reason behind the withdrawal is nothing too exciting. There are some certain sections of the plans that need strengthening and it was decided that we should withdraw and resubmit at a later stage."

Tensions are already high between residents and Aldridge Construction, according to Rushall Councillor Richard Worrall, due to the current limestone infilling at the site.

According to Councillor Worrall, the infilling should have finished by now and has increased considerably in size from when it started.

He said: "This whole issue with the limestone infilling and the proposal for the natural burial ground is a long running saga which really residents should not have to put up with."

Asked for his views on the cemetery proposals, Councillor Worrall declined to comment due to his position on Walsall Council's planning committee.

Ofsted rating is just Bee-rilant!



Busy Bee nursery manager Kelly Smith celebrates the outstanding rating

A WALSALL nursery is celebrating after being rated outstanding by Ofsted.

Busy Bees, based on Green Lane, was praised for its leadership, teaching, development and outcomes for its children – being rated outstanding in all these areas.

Ofsted described manager Kelly Smith and her staff as 'extremely passionate' and 'dedicated'. The education watchdog also heaped praise on the nursery's 'exemplary partnerships' with parents and its 'imaginative use of resources'.

Helen Plested, the deputy manager at the nursery, said: "Obviously we are ecstatic that we have received our first outstanding rating. It was a team effort and all the staff work really hard to make the nursery as good as it can be."

"We are very grateful to all the parents as well who were here when the Ofsted inspectors came round and spoke to them. We feel the outstanding rating is long overdue."

A report, prepared by inspectors after they visited the home on November 25, said: "The manager and staff are dedicated to offering children and families a high quality, all-inclusive service that meets their needs."

There is more to celebrate for the nursery as it has also received a five star food hygiene rating as well.



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Robin 2 is rocking towards its 25th



The Robin 2 in Bilston

ONE of the Black Country's top live music venues celebrates its quarter century in a few months.

The original Robin R'n'B Club opened on April 9, 1992, at its original home at the old Robin Hood Inn at Merry Hill, Brierley Hill. The club is now the Robin 2 in Mount Pleasant, Bilston, and continues to be run by founder Mike Hamblett.

The former Sub Zero drummer created the club, specialising in blues, soul and rock in the former Citizen's Theatre at the pub. He opened the second

700-capacity club in the former drill hall in Bilston in 1998 and the two sites ran together until the original club closed in 2003. The 25th anniversary of the first Robin show will see The Muffin Men, a group made up of former Frank Zappa musicians, performing in the Robin 2 on April 9.

Mr Hamblett has continued to improve the Robin 2 and it now includes its own hotel as well as Noddy's Bar, named after original Slade singer and guitarist Noddy Holder, who helped launch the original Robin.

The club's opening night in 1992 saw 200 turned away because it was a sell-out.

The first band to perform was The Journey Men, featuring former Move guitarist Trevor Burton and singer Jim Hickman, who was a member of Black Country favourites Little Acree for many years. Slade, a regular visitor over the years, returned in December for a Christmas concert that also marked the 50th anniversary of the group which still includes original members Dave Hill and Don Powell.

Borough food poisoning complaints near 1,500

NEARLY 1,500 claims of food poisoning have been made against Walsall food outlets in the last five years, new figures show.

Last year 12 outlets were prosecuted for having unhygienic premises, including 11 being fined for more than £19,000 combined.

The figures show that one in 10 food outlets based in Walsall require 'major improvement' to their hygiene as they are putting the public's health at risk, while a total of 1,361 food poisoning cases across the borough have been reported and investigated by environmental health staff since 2011.

Examples of food outlets from the borough being taken to court include Cantonese takeaway Po Wing on Harden Road, whose owner was fined £2,000 after inspectors found mouse droppings were found throughout the premises, including its kitchen and customer counter.

Important

Owners of Polish bakery Mazowsze, on Bloxwich Lane Industrial Estate, Walsall, were also taken to court and fined £4,500 having unhygienic premises and stocking contaminated food after mouse faeces were found throughout the premises.

Councillor Ian Robertson, who is the council's portfolio holder for health, said it was vitally important that users of takeaways checked their hygiene ratings, which are often advertised on the entrance of a site.

He said: "I think some excellent work has been done over the last year in identifying problems with certain food outlets and even taking the step of closing down some sites that were a risk to the public.

"Hygiene at takeaways is an increasingly important issue as more and more pop up across the borough. To identify these risks and establish what has to be done is a crucial job and I think we are tackling the problem well."

The figures and the council's commitment to cleaning up establishments across the borough will be discussed at a Walsall Council full council meeting this week, as the authority looks to re-commit with the Environmental Health and Trading Standards' 'Food & Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan'.

Jazz players are homeward bound



Musical director John Hughes seen with the musicians who make up Walsall Jazz Orchestra

THEY are a band of professional players who have produced some of the country's finest musicians over the last four decades and played all over the world – but the Walsall Jazz Orchestra wants to build its audience back home in 2017.

The orchestra, which consists of 18 of the borough's best-trained musicians, has accumulated awards, radio airplay and performances at the world famous Montreux Jazz Festival over its 40-year history.

But musical director John Hughes says a home audience is something that continues to elude him and his bandmates.

Mr Hughes, aged 76, started the group as a youth band back in 1975 and expanded it to become a community band as its members grew older.

Today, the band play funky jazz numbers from the back catalogues of legends such as Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, as well as originals composed by its own members.

Mr Hughes said: "It doesn't seem to matter how we promote or push the gigs in Walsall, we still struggle to get a real audience.

"We are all experienced musicians and over the years members of the orchestra have gone on to great things, performing with

Jamiroquai and other artists who are world famous. I think the orchestra is something for Walsall to be proud of, we have a great history and reputation.

"Those who do turn up tend to be in their 50s and 60s but we play music that would go over well with the younger crowds, it's not all Glenn Miller style material as you would expect. We really want to build our audience back home this year."

The band's next show will take place at Forest Arts Centre on Hawbush Road, on Monday, with tickets costing £5. To purchase tickets, call 0300 555 2898

Motorists' M5 misery as slip roads set to close

DRIVERS will be forced to take long detours as slip roads on the M5 will be closed overnight for more than three months at the Birchley Island in Oldbury, forcing drivers to take long detours.

After 9pm, traffic will not be able to get on or off the motorway at the busy roundabout – which leads onto Junction 2 – until May once the closures come into force.

Both the northbound and southbound sides will be affected.

It means people needing to get onto the M5 during the night will have head to either West Bromwich or Halesowen. Those coming off will also need to do so at either Junction 1 for West Brom or Junction 3 for Halesowen.

Lorry drivers and other night traffic could face regular disruption.

The closures have been announced by Highways England which will be carrying out major repairs on the slip roads, including resurfacing and waterproofing.

Streetworks and other carriage-way repairs are also planned.

The first night closure will be on Monday, and will continue until April 30. Slip roads will re-open at 6am each day.

Oldbury councillor Suzanne Hartwell said: "Whatever they do there is going to be disruption. But if they need to do roadworks it is the best time to do it. It's better than nine in the morning.

"It will cause disruption but I would ask drivers to be patient and be cautious on the roads while this is going on."

£150k saved on social care staff

A WALSALL Council cabinet member has said that 'dramatically improved' absence rates with social care staff over 2015/16 have saved the authority more than £150,000.

Social care chief Councillor Diane Coughlan, was due to give councillors an update on work carried out in the sector over 2016 at a meeting this week.

In a report covering staffing issues, the West Midlands STP and mental health work, councillor Coughlan said that the improvements to absence levels have saved the council more than £150,000. She said: "In the 2016/17 year the Directorate will complete a re-structure reducing management layers by three tiers. This creates a new management structure, delivering financial and organisational efficiencies."

Car fire shuts off part of main road

A CAR fire closed part of a major route onto the M6 during rush hour.

The incident happened just before 5.30pm on the Black Country Route towards J10 on Friday.

Fire crews from Walsall attended the blaze following an engine failure on a BMW 5 series.

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Winnick hits out at Tory onslaught on borough

AN MP has spoken out against the effect of central Government cuts on a Black Country borough - accusing the Government of 'a Tory onslaught'.

Speaking in the House of Commons, MP David Winnick, who represents Walsall North, called the cuts 'crippling'. Addressing Secretary of State Sajid Javid, Mr Winnick said: "The most crippling cuts are being planned in Walsall borough, because the allocation from central Government has been nearly halved in the past six years."

"Does the Secretary of State not understand that I am talking about an area - my area - where there is so much deprivation and poverty?"

"The cuts next year will be even higher than previous ones, so I want to ask: why is there a Tory onslaught on this borough, and when is this war going to end?"

In response, Mr Javid said: "The honourable Gentleman will know that all councils across the country, without exception, have been asked to find efficiencies and make savings. For example, sharing services means that some of them have been able to maintain the level of services, but at a lower cost to taxpayers."

"He mentioned his borough of Walsall; it, like many other areas, needs to do things better and deliver services in a better way where it can, but he will see an increase in core spending power by the end of this Parliament, and the changes to adult social care budgets that we have announced today will also help his borough."

GP surgery will be turned into homes

A FORMER doctor's surgery which has been targeted by vandals since it shut will become homes after a plan was approved.

The former Abbey Square Surgery in Abbey Square, Bloxwich, will be converted into a terrace of three bungalows. It will also be extended on its eastern side, facing Cresswell Crescent, as part of the development.

The three homes will consist of two two-bedroomed homes and one three-bedroomed home. All current parking for six cars and access will be retained. All work must be undertaken within the next three years, planning officers said. The plan, on behalf of Cradley Heath-based GD Designs, was formally given the green light by council planning officers.

More taking the easyJet route

LOW-COST airline easyJet saw passenger numbers rise by 15.1 per cent in December to 5.57 million. The load factor on its flights, some of which depart Birmingham Airport, rose from 86.6 per cent to 89.9 per cent.

Is this last orders for social club?



Springvale Social Club in Bilston

A SOCIAL club in Bilston is on the verge of being demolished after plans were submitted to build 14 homes and a new clubhouse.

Springvale Sports and Social Club, in Millfields Road, closed its doors to members in February last year, although it has still been used for pre-booked functions.

Now plans have been submitted to raze the building to the ground, and replace it with 14 homes, a new clubhouse facility and a nursery building.

Bowling greens will be retained, while football and cricket pitches will

be repositioned. The site was bought by Midcounties Co-operative in 2007.

Architects Gould Singleton said in the design and access statement: "Whilst the sporting facilities at the site seem to be sustainable and well supported, the social club and function room facilities, together with the deteriorating building fabric and need of continued heavy investment prove to be non-sustainable and was recently in 2016 closed on a day-to-day basis."

"Midcounties Co-operative seek to find solutions on how to preserve

the sporting facilities but generate sufficient capital from development to put back new, modern day, more appropriately-sized facilities to serve the community sporting groups and activities."

"Initial proposals illustrated a scheme which involved the loss of one of the bowling greens and a new clubhouse facility with a housing development. In 2016 scheme proposals were modified to relocate sporting facilities upon the outfield." The club stands at the site of the former Spring Vale Iron Works in Millfields Road.

Demolition starts early following centre blaze

WORK to demolish a disused leisure centre has started early following a suspected arson attack.

Fifteen fire crews were called out to the blaze at Oak Park Leisure Centre in Walsall Wood.

Firefighters attended the scene at around 5.17pm last Tuesday. Investigations into the cause are ongoing. Despite fears that someone may have been inside, no-one was discovered, and the fire was largely contained to the reception area.

The centre closed last year when the new £12 million Oak Park Active Living Centre opened across the road.

The old site was scheduled for demolition and tenders were due to be issued early next week, according to Walsall Council. The work will now be undertaken 'over the course of the next few weeks'.

Wednesbury-based contractor NCP Humphries Demolition was called in to start work following the fire.

Staff began tearing up the entrance and roof yesterday. Workers at the site had only recently finished clearing the building of asbestos and preparing for it to be knocked down.

Progress

Tweeting from the scene during the height of the blaze, West Midlands Fire Service station commander Andy Smith said they needed the large number of crews to provide sufficient breathing apparatus. He added: "Good progress now being made with a simultaneous attack from above and below fire. A challenging incident due to complex building construction."

The challenge posed by the building's design was reiterated by Aldridge watch commander Dave Hartland, who said: "It's been difficult to tackle because of layers in the roof. We need to remove it to check for any hotspots. There has been damage to approximately 12 per cent of the building. There is no longer asbestos or chemicals."

The fire blocked the A461 Lichfield Road between Brook Lane and Brownhills Road, causing delays for drivers. June Johnson works as a sales assistant at the KFC opposite the leisure centre. The 54-year-old said: "It was around 5pm when one fire engine turned up, and then there were loads of them. It was mad."

Leisure chief Councillor Julie Fitzpatrick, said: "On the advice of the fire service, work has now commenced to strip the roof completely and this will be followed by the demolition of the building. We expect this work to be completed over the course of the next few weeks."



Demolition takes place of the fire affected part of Oak Park Leisure centre in Walsall Wood



Fire crews working at the scene of the fire



Fire engines gather during the fire at the centre

NEWS IN BRIEF

Puppy illegally imported held

AN illegally imported dog that was not vaccinated against rabies has been put into quarantine.

The 10-week-old French Bulldog puppy, called Charlie, was bought by a Sandwell couple from a seller on Gumtree. The puppy did not have the proper paperwork.

Sandwell Council's environmental health team were contacted by a vet when it was realised the dog had been illegally brought into the country from the Czech Republic. All imported dogs must be vaccinated against rabies at 12 weeks before travelling abroad.

Career advice at hand for students

A CAREERS speed networking event will be held for students at Q3 Academy in Great Barr.

The Q3 Academies Trust, in partnership with Black Country Chamber of Commerce, is organising the event on March 27.

Employers who are passionate about their business are also being sought to donate half a day of their time to talk to young people about working in their industry. Each business volunteer will have their own station and students will take turns to carousel around in small groups to find out more about different career paths.

Thief stole from same shop twice

A WOMAN who stole clothes from the same shop twice in less than a fortnight avoided an immediate jail term.

Joanne Foster, from Willenhall, took £300 worth of women's clothes on October 3 from TK Maxx in Stafford. She returned on October 16 and took £300 in men's clothes.

Foster, of Hill Road, aged 37, admitted the thefts at a Cannock Magistrates' hearing on Friday. She was handed an eight-week jail term, suspended for 12 months and must pay £185 costs and £115 victim surcharge.

Major road closed overnight for repairs

TRAFFIC disruption is due this week on the Black Country New Road in Tipton, for essential repairs.

Sandwell Highways has revealed work is needed to repair joints on the viaduct. There will be overnight lane closures on the major route between 8pm and 6am, every day until Friday.

A spokesman said: "This is part of rolling roadworks that had been planned by our highways team." The repair work will be carried out by closing lanes and using a convoy system.

Crash blocks road

A CRASH blocked a road during the early hours of yesterday morning.

The car ended up blocking the road after crashing at 7.32am in College Road, Kingstanding, near Great Barr.

No-one was seriously injured and police said inquiries were ongoing.

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YES, there is a lot of it about. Sniffles, cough, headache and, just when you think you've shaken it off, it comes back again. I couldn't help noticing at a party recently how some of the cheeks one kissed were burning hot. As this winter's dreaded lurgy continues, I foresee a return of Hollywood-style contactless air-kissing. Mwah, mwah, darlings.

WALKING down the street into an oncoming stream of shoppers (including me), a man wearing earphones was holding his laptop in front of him at eye-level and conducting a Skype conversation with somebody, at full volume. This incident proved that communal wishing does not work. Everyone in that street was thinking: "Go on, you idiot, walk into a lamppost," but the Skype merchant missed them all.

AT least the old 19th century houses were easy to take down. I spent one summer as a labourer on the demolition of a huge Regency villa. There was no need to use a demolition ball, nor even a hammer or chisel. We simply lifted every brick by hand. There was no adhesive power in the powdery old mortar and the only thing holding each course of bricks in place was the weight of the bricks above. A bricklayer told me the old buildings remained standing only because all the woodworms were holding hands.

TV dramas are filmed months before they are screened. So the makers of *Halcyon* (ITV) must have watched in horror a few weeks ago as *Close to the Enemy* (BBC1) was broadcast.



Note the startling similarities between the two offerings. Same setting, in a 1940s hotel. Same atmosphere of conspiracy about the reasons for the Second World War. Same jazz band with sexy chanteuse. And to cap it all, both dramas had the actress *Charity Wakefield* playing a blonde femme fatale. Both series were about spies. So who's been spying on whom...?

AS a fully paid-up guardian of Joe Public against the monstrous forces of government, I should be outraged at the news of new powers allowing Whitehall departments to share individuals' details with local councils. I find myself strangely unoutraged. If Mr J Public is pleading poverty to the town hall to get benefits but HMRC knows he is a millionaire, the sooner the taxman has a word with the town clerk, the better. In any case, didn't we all assume they were sharing information already?

I SAW this scrawled on a wall this week: "Carrie is a grass." Don't you find it strangely reassuring that in the age of cyber-crime and DNA profiling, our criminal-justice system still has a place for the good old-fashioned copper's nark?

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Airport is the world's most punctual

BIRMINGHAM Airport has been named the world's most punctual airport in 2016 by air travel intelligence company OAG, with 91.28 per cent of arriving and departing flights operating on time.

With more than 100,000 scheduled flights from Birmingham Airport last year, the most punctual route was to Dublin, boasting an on-time score of over 95 per cent. The UK airport

beat contenders from countries such as Japan, Brazil, America, Germany and Australia to claim the global crown.

On receiving the award, Birmingham Airport's chief executive, Paul Kehoe, said, "To be crowned the world's most punctual airport in 2016 is a tremendous prize, particularly in the busiest 12 months in our 77-year history. This achievement

is a result of a team effort by the 7,000 employees and 140 companies operating at the airport - from the ground handlers to bus drivers, fuellers to caterers, and cleaners to office staff. We have invested £350m in the last 10 years to improve the airport infrastructure and we're currently working on a further one million pound development project to improve passenger facilities even further.

These investments have helped us achieve this award because we can offer our customers an efficient service.

"The success of Birmingham is just another example of how the UK's regional airports have created world-class facilities and networks that both connect their regional communities to the world, and provide valuable economic growth."

Opening times signs of confusion for tip users

By Marion Brennan

A CONFUSING sign at a busy recycling sign - causing people to turn up on the wrong day - is costing ratepayers thousands of pounds, a council chief claims.

Two information boards on either side of the entrance to Aldridge recycling depot in Walsall read: 'This site is closed every Wednesday & Tuesday' in large letters.

But because of the back-to-front order of the sign, many people read it as Wednesday and Thursday and turn up on a day it is closed - leading some visitors to dump their rubbish illegally in frustration instead of returning to the depot on another day, said Councillor Mike Bird, Conservative leader of Walsall Council.

"Some people may think the sign is funny but actually it has serious consequences. Fly-tipping costs the council hundreds of thousands of pounds a year and this sign is contributing to those rising costs," said Councillor Bird.

"If it's not pointed out to you, or you're not concentrating, people read 'Tuesday' as 'Thursday', it's an easy thing to do. I've read it like that and other people have raised it with me also.

Temptation

"The problem is if people turn up with a car load of rubbish to recycle and the site is closed, they may very well dump it elsewhere. If you've got your car full, it's going to be very hard to go home, unload it all, and load up again another day. The temptation to fly-tip is great."

Fly-tipping has blighted the borough in recent years. Latest figures show the problem cost the council up to £28,000 a month last year. This year's bill is expected to top £120,000.

It is feared an unpopular move to scrap weekly collections in favour of fortnightly pick-ups in order to save £1 million will only add to the problem. With around 2,000 people having their applications for bigger bins rejected, many are predicting a further rise in fly-tipping.

A report earlier this year revealed the worst hot spots for fly-tipping in the borough. They included Slacky Lane, Spout Lane, Winterley Lane and Bull Lane, Moxley. In August it emerged that cameras designed to catch offenders in Darlaston had not been working for six weeks.



Another sign near the facility which outlines all the days of the week the recycling centre is actually open



A visitor to Aldridge tip seen near the two signs at the entrance which say it is closed on Wednesday and Tuesday

Busiest day recorded in ambulance trust history

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service rang in 2017 with the busiest day ever for the Trust.

Throughout January 1, WMAS received no fewer than 4,629 emergency calls, 807 more than the previous most busy day, New Year's Day 2011.

It rounded off an incredibly busy festive period for the Trust. From December 29, to January 2, the service took 18,583 calls compared to 15,933 for the same period in 2015-16, equal to a 16.6 per cent rise in call numbers for the five days.

While the evening of New Year's Eve and the early hours of New Year's Day were filled with alcohol-related calls including assaults, falls and unconscious patients, the majority of calls during the five days were for people who were unwell with the likes of breathing difficulties, chest pains and falls.

Trust chief executive Anthony Marsh, said: "I am very grateful and proud of all the staff and volunteers that worked through this period. While the majority of people were enjoying time with family and friends, my staff were working 24 hours a day to keep the public of the West Midlands safe.

"Over the years we have developed incredibly detailed plans and made preparations for this incredibly busy period.

"Once again, that planning has paid off and we have met this challenge and continued to provide a very high standard of service to patients."

Homes plan for former orchard

HOMES are to be built on land which was once used as an orchard.

Cannock Chase District Council has given outline planning permission for a house in Hayfield Hill, Cannock Wood, to be demolished with three detached houses built in its place.

Meanwhile, nine homes could be built on land if council chiefs give a plan the go-ahead.

Applicants want to build behind their detached house on Norton East Road in Norton Canes.

The extension would not be built on the house's garden and it is not included in the proposal.

Currently the land is used to store six caravans.

Cannock Chase District Council planning bosses will make a decision on the plan later.

Ready for rambling across the Chase

CHASE Ramblers will be going on an eight-mile moderate walk from Rugeley this Sunday. Walkers should meet as usual at the railway station car park, in Anglesey Street, Hednesford, for a 9am prompt departure. Contact Tom or Jen on 01889 586168.

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Garden city status hope for housing falls through

A PLANNED garden city scheme that will see 45,000 new homes built across the Black Country has failed in a bid for Government funding, it has been confirmed.

Plans for the project, which spans over 31 different sites, were outlined in March, but the scheme was omitted from the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) funding announcement last week.

Bosses behind the Black Country plans admitted the decision was 'disappointing' but insisted that the scheme would go ahead as planned. They said work was already progressing and that development was not solely reliant on DCLG funding.

The project has been billed as the biggest regeneration of brownfield sites across the country, and would see new housing built across the boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Explore

The DCLG confirmed a combined Black Country bid 'was unsuccessful in bidding for garden village/town status'.

Sarah Middleton, chief executive of The Black Country Consortium, which is behind the project, said: "It is disappointing that we were not able to secure funding on this occasion, but there are other funding streams that we will continue to explore."

"We have already been successful in tapping into other funding sources, and it is important to stress that the project is not dependant on Government funding."

"By working with housing associations and private sector builders we can ensure that between 60 and 70 per cent of the housing in the Black Country will be delivered without public sector cash."

Ms Middleton said that around 500 homes had been built under the scheme so far, with an average of 4,000 houses planned to be built annually and millions of pounds of funding already secured."

Charity funds' bazaar success

A CARE home raised more than £350 for Autism West Midlands at its popular Christmas bazaar.

Residents at the Hawthorns Aldridge, a luxury retirement and care community, welcomed friends, family and visitors. Aldridge Pheasey Brownies, Guides and the Senior Section sang carols around the foyer Christmas tree.

The event featured a variety of festive stalls, a Body Shop franchise and a fundraising Dogs For The Deaf stall.

Stallholders donated gifts for the tombola including wine, Champagne and a festive hamper. Rose Johnson, Hawthorns Aldridge general manager said: "We are absolutely delighted to have raised so much for such a worthy local cause."

Floral boost for hit-and-run victim



Ms Neary, with her flowers

POLICE officers went above and beyond the call of duty, taking flowers to the victim of a hit-and-run in the Black Country.

Kathleen Neary, from Pelsall in Walsall, was travelling along Goscote Lane in Bloxwich, when she was hit by an uninsured driver, who then sped off. The 66-year-old's Vauxhall Astra was written off after it was hit by the Ford Ka.

However after the incident, which left Ms Neary badly shaken, Bloxwich Neighbourhood Team clubbed together and bought her flowers.

Ms Neary, who has worked at Smiths Warehouse for more than 40 years, said: "It was lovely, a really nice gesture. I was expecting them to come round and take some more details and update me with what was going on but I did not expect that. It was a really nice surprise."

Asked about the crash, which happened on December 28, Ms Neary added: "This car was coming up Goscote Lane and police were following him. Because he could not get past me he mounted the footpath and hit the side of my car as he drove past."

"He then just carried on driving like nothing had happened. The side of my car was badly damaged and my wing mirror had been knocked off. The repairs will be too expensive and not worth it so I am looking for a new car."

"I was really shaken up at the time but I am fine now and did not need to go to hospital."

"I just could not work out where they had come from. The only good thing is that nobody was hurt. Yes my car was damaged but that can be replaced, unlike a life."

Clanking cover drains patience of residents

A LOOSE manhole cover which 'clanks' every time it is driven over has been described as 'living nightmare' by a resident.

Grant Williams, from Bloxwich, said the problems on Broad Lane have persisted 'every day' and 'every night' for the past three months.

The 51-year-old legal adviser has criticised Walsall Council for failing to take responsibility declaring residents in the area are losing their patience.

He said: "It is literally a living nightmare. It is the main road from South Staffordshire to Walsall and gets quite a lot of traffic."

"To be honest at rush hour it is at a standstill and there are other noises like the television. But at 3 o'clock in the morning when a van goes over and it is clank, clank, clank it is a nuisance. It is a problem, every day and every night, it's incessant."

On closer inspection of the manhole it is possible to see the asphalt crumbling away at the edges, while one corner has a two-inch wide hole.

Mr Williams said there had also been flooding on the pathway nearby which he believes to be related to the same manhole.

Responsibility

He said he had raised the issue with a local councillor who had told him it was the responsibility of housing developer Dunedin Homes, but the resident declared as highways authority the council should be the ones to fix the cover and are simply passing the buck.

He added: "Walsall Council is the highways authority so it should be their responsibility. We have tried to get some progress with it but nothing has been done."

"It is disturbing everybody. I am a driveway-length away and it's bad for me but there are people who live closer who it must be even worse for."

"Everybody is losing their patience. It is not something the council should allow to continue."

Walsall Council and Dunedin Homes were unavailable for comment.

In September it was announced that Walsall Council is to receive £188,000 from the Government for the 2017/18 financial year in order to fix potholes. The sum is £48,000 more than the authority was granted this year.

A range of road-related problems can be flagged up at Walsall.gov.uk using the Highways Maintenance tab.

The contact centre can be called on 01922 653344.



Grant Williams, of Broad Lane, who is angry at the lack of response to fix a drain cover in the road

Rumble on with region's grapplers

PROFESSIONAL wrestlers will take part in a 'Rileys Rumble' later this month hours before American giants WWE stage their flagship battle royal event.

World Wrestling Entertainment stage their 30th Royal Rumble at the Alamodome in Texas on Sunday January 29.

Box Office purchasers in the UK will watch proceedings on pay-per-view from the early hours

of Monday morning, due to the five-hour time difference between the two nations.

Rileys Sports Bar, on Broad Street in Wolverhampton city centre, is staying open to screen the event but will first host a bone-bending bill of their own.

Promoter and grappler Matt Powell, from Walsall, will bring Pro Wrestling Live to Rileys, where his performers will emu-

late their WWE counterparts. A full wrestling show will be topped by their own 30-man over the top rope 'Royal Rumble,' where 25 competitors will join the fray 30 seconds at a time after two have started the bout.

Doors will open at 6.30pm, for a 7pm start. Entry is £6, or £10 VIP (front three rows) with a family of four admitted for £20. For more information, call 07404 279 880.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Police in appeal on missing man

POLICE have put out an appeal for a missing person with mental health issues. West Midlands Police are asking for anyone who can help trace the whereabouts of



Mr Diamond

Bloxwich man Michael Diamond to come forward after he was reported missing.

Mr Diamond is a white male who often wears a turban and calls himself Narinder Singh. He is 5ft tall and

is of a thin build with a full grey beard. Mr Diamond has mental health issues and is believed to frequently visit the Sikh Gurdwara in Walsall.

A police spokesman said: "He has never been missing before and officers are getting increasingly concerned for his welfare. If you see him or know where he is, please call Insp Jacqueline Nicholson on 101 ext 889 3096."

Cuts and bruising for boy in collision

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD boy escaped with just cuts and bruises after he was hit by a car. Paramedics attended at the junction of Sand Bank and Wolverhampton Road in Bloxwich at about 3.30pm on Tuesday.

A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman said the boy was able to get up straight away following the accident but was left 'distressed'. He arrived at the Walsall Manor Hospital at about 4.30pm.

The car was moving at slow speed when it hit the boy - but he was left with a cut forehead and bruising to his elbow and right knee.

It's 50p land as prices are cut

WILLENHALL-BASED budget retailer Poundland has cut the price of thousands of items to 50p in its first ever sales event.

While the firm has reduced prices in the past to clear stocks, this month's sale marks the first time the retailer has halved the price of core items in its ranges. Trading director, Barry Williams, said: "No-one loves a bargain more than Poundland customers and they're asking us to do more."

Items that will be reduced to 50p include Dolmio Bolognese sauce, Heinz Tomato Soup, and Ambrosia custard.

Medics treat victims of crash near store

TWO people were treated by paramedics after a two-car collision near a supermarket.

The two vehicles crashed on Burns Road, near the Aldi store in Moxley, at about 2.20pm on Tuesday. A woman in her thirties was treated for minor leg pain while a second patient was treated for other minor injuries. Both were discharged at the scene.

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Disgust at out-of-hours NHS shambles

I WRITE with regard to the disgusting situation over the holiday period and the out-of-hours medical services.

After feeling ill on December 27, I telephoned NHS 111 for advice. I was left waiting for over four hours and no telephone call was received from an on-call GP. After I rang again to see if I had been forgotten, I was informed that it would be at least another two hours before I was contacted by a doctor.

This would have taken the time to 2.30 am the following morning. I informed the caller I would try again on December 28. I duly telephoned and waited over 30 minutes to be connected to an operator on the 111 service. Finally getting through I was told to go the Saddlers Walk-in centre where I should expect to wait at least three hours to be seen, or if I went to the Manor hospital walk-in service it was a seven-hour wait!

This is an absolute disgrace, and GPs should take some of the blame for the long waiting times at these centres. Why couldn't GPs reopen on December 27, and people wasting time with their condition or symptoms can often wait until their GP's surgery reopens. One woman was only in the centre for the morning after pill! Instead of the present government being concerned about overseas aid perhaps they would like to get their own house in order first, and plough more money into the NHS and social care system and provide adequate out of hours medical services.

The voice of Cameron still ringing in my ears, 'Welcome to the vision of 24 hours a day, seven days a week health service'. God help us!

SALMENA HASOOD
Walsall

Honours list pantomime misses point

ONCE again we have seen the annual pantomime that is the New Year Honours list.

I fail to see how people who are actually paid to do their job can receive an honour?

Surely they are only doing the job that is expected of them because it is what they're paid to do, I am thinking particularly of MPs MEPs and councillors.

I know of many volunteers who are active within a charitable organisation with no salary or payment to collect and these people go unrecognised.

More unsung volunteers should be honoured for the work they do after all they have no contract of employment to fulfil.

In my experience, and I am sure many will agree with me, they are often more passionate about helping others than someone who might be in paid employment.

Let us honour our community volunteers, in my opinion they are more worthy!

SALMENA HASOOD
Walsall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Walsall Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

EMAIL

walsall.chron@
expressandstar.co.uk

Galleries should join forces to survive cuts

THE news that Walsall Art Gallery is in financial trouble through Government money cuts chimes with the similar problems at the Stafford Shire Hall Gallery.

Both are at risk through Government cutting off the cash. In the case of Walsall, it is a nationally famous gallery which is in a poor location, and Stafford is an obscure gallery which is well served by rail links. I would suggest that it is possible for the two councils to work together for the benefit of both towns.

It would be sensible to have a joint gallery project on two sites, with one management to cut costs and shared art works, which can move from one site to the other. As Stafford and Walsall are both on the A34 and are close to the M6, it is even possible to think of a shuttle bus to go between the sites. The boost to Stafford would be considerable, and for Walsall it would allow its art gallery to survive. Better times may come when a more sensible Government takes over and restores the money.

However I do not see this as a stop gap solution. It is a vital that for both Staffordshire and Walsall there are links which will allow more people to see art. In the longer term I see a co-operative network of galleries as essential so that art moves to serve the people. While I like the Barber Gallery at Birmingham University, for example, I know only too well that very few people know it exists and it is usually empty. It would be sensible to move some of the artworks to better placed galleries on occasion. And with a flow of fresh art to look at, surely more people would go to the galleries? Splendid isolation is no longer splendid.

TREVOR FISHER
Stafford

Slow does not always mean safe

T STOCKTON needs to learn that the rat-run he refers to would not exist if the powers-that-be spent decent money ensuring the adjacent main road was free-flowing.

Taxpayers deserve assistance with travel, not speed restrictions.

Furthermore, I often see 'traffic calming' causing problems on adjoining roads (extra traffic, etc).

On that basis, a 20 restriction is only fair to the treasury who spend minimal money paying lip-service to road safety, and local politicians who I suggest rejoice when poor roads are masked over by arguments over speed.

There are too many NIMBYs getting involved in road safety: the accident figures are national, not just one road.

It is upsetting to see taxpayers falling for the old slow argument, at everybody's expense.

A safe road is a safe road, be it on slower or faster roads.

The only difference is that on the faster road more of our hard earned taxes would have been spent.

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Make it a date and get to the art of Brum



One of the unusual images included in the Birmingham-themed calendar from Walsall artist Carolyn Bayliss. A COLLECTION of unusual images of Birmingham locations been compiled into a calendar by a Walsall artist.

Carolyn Bayliss is behind the project, which includes a shot of tricolour balloons flying over the city's iconic Rotunda, the site of an IRA bomb in 1974, and a closed building in Constitution Hill with the words 'Help I'm Trapped' written on an upper window from the inside. The 52-year-old, who lives in Walsall town centre and helps organise

the community arts festival there, captured the images for Birmingham Our Streets.

She said: "Some of the images reflect the multiculturalism of this vibrant city while some conjure up images of a Birmingham long gone."

The 2017 calendar, available on Lulu.com, is the latest work by the visual artist who specialises in one-off projects and organising performances and events.

Pageant to aid charity

A MOTHER and daughter are staging a beauty pageant to raise vital heart charity funds.

Carol and Jess Watts, from Bloxwich run the British Heart Foundation Walsall Fundraising Group and have launched the Miss Charity Heart 2017 event.

It takes place at Bar Sport's Premier Suite, in High Green, Cannock, on February 19 from 2pm.

Carol and Jess have supported the charity for the past four years after Carol's husband, Keith, survived two heart attacks in 2012.

This is the fourth time the group has organised the pageant. All net proceeds will go towards research to help prevent and treat heart and circulatory disease.

BHF fundraising manager Donna Stokes said: "We're incredibly grateful to the Walsall BHF Fundraising

Group for their on-going support." For further details on the pageant, visit www.dragonfliesevents.moonfruit.com or call Carol on 07707 534476.

The closing date to enter is January 18.

Tickets to watch the event cost £5 and can be purchased online via www.dragonfliesevents.moonfruit.com, from Carol at Dragonflies Boutique, 45/47 High Street, Bloxwich, or on the day.

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Driver dies after BMW crashes through walls

A DRIVER died after his BMW crashed through brick walls and railings outside homes in Walsall.

The car came off West Bromwich Road, The Delves, on the night of Monday, January 2, and smashed through three driveways before becoming lodged on a wall.

The 36-year-old driver was dragged from the car and CPR was performed on the driveway – but he was confirmed dead at the scene.

A 22-year-old passenger had to be cut free from the mangled remains of the car and she was taken to hospital with serious arm and leg injuries.

Householders have been left counting the cost of damage to their homes.

Fences, walls and railings were decimated and car parts were left strewn across their driveways and the road.

Carnage

Tony and Jill Hunt's property suffered the most damage, including a recently bought Toyota Aygo which had been parked on their drive and is thought to be a write-off.

Mr Hunt, aged 45, said: "We had just gone to bed at about 9.50pm and were just falling asleep when we heard an almighty bang.

"We thought someone had come through our living room it was that loud. I got straight onto the police and looked out of the window. It was complete carnage. The car involved was stuck half on our side of the wall and half over next door.

"We thought that the man and woman inside had died immediately, but then we saw some movement. The police and ambulance crews turned up within minutes and they must have thought the driver had died because they dragged him out of the car and started performing CPR.



The BMW driver died after his car left the road and smashed through a wall

"The next thing he was in an ambulance and they were trying to get the woman out. Fire crews had to cut the roof off the car to get her free."

The crash happened at around 10.20pm near the junction with Bell Lane. Police closed West Bromwich Road from Fullbrook Road and emergency crews remained at the scene for several hours.

Stunned residents came out from their homes and some attempted to help the driver and passenger trapped inside the car. West Midlands Police confirmed the driver had died.

A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman, said: "On arrival, crews discovered two patients who were still inside the car following the collision.

"The driver, a man, was found to be in cardiac arrest and was rapidly freed from the car in order for CPR and advanced life support to commence. The passenger was trapped in the car for about 45 minutes and had to be cut free with the help of the fire service."

West Bromwich Road has been the scene of several crashes in recent years and residents have long sought improved safety measures.

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Wednesbury's Lower High Street during the early part of the 20th century



The up-and-coming genteel sport of tennis was starting to take off in Wednesbury



In contrast to the industrial times, Wednesbury's cricket scene thrived



Local historian Tony Highfield at Darlaston Library with the new book 'Ryder's Annual'

Ryder's Annual a unique glimpse of growing town

IT has taken a year to put together, but now people have the chance to glimpse into the past and get their hands on a very special piece of Black Country history.

The Very Best of Ryder's Annual book has been put together by Bev Parker and Tony Highfield.

The book features some of the stories and pictures from the well-known Ryder's Annual, that was first published in the 19th century.

The book charts Wednesbury's history from 1878 to 1918 and goes some way in illustrating the people of the town's contribution to the war effort.

Tony Highfield, aged 74, of Bloxwich revealed how he first came up with the idea for the book. He said: "I was walking down Darlaston High Street when a friend of mine, Joan Bytheway, came up to me and said she had been given some old books for a jumble sale."

"She asked whether I'd like to see them. I said I would and when I went

MEMORY LANE

Report by Jessica Labhart

round there and saw them, I couldn't believe it. The books were two extremely rare Ryder's Annuals.

"I asked if I could borrow them, which I was told I could, and then I spoke to Bev about them. We decided to begin putting a book together on the best of the annuals, and went and visited Wednesbury Library to look at their archive of annuals, too."

The book was launched on December 3 at Wednesbury Library then at Darlaston Library on December 10. Mindful Gifts CIC, based on Church Street, Darlaston, a not-for-profit organisation, is also sponsoring the book as it specialises in gifts and activities for people with dementia.

It is hoped that the book will provide an insight into the life and times of local people's ancestors. The book also contains an almanac devoted to the First World War.

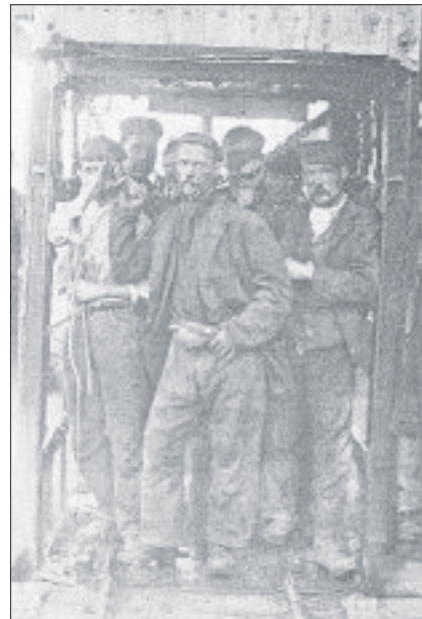
Mr Highfield said: "I just think it is so interesting to see the lives of the people in the book."

"People might be able to find their ancestors in there, old businesses, churches, groups, clubs and societies." In the introduction of the book, Bev Parker states: "The Ryder Annuals offer a unique insight into life in a successful and rapidly developing area. They feature images of the town's dignitaries, industrialists, councillors, photographs of the town centre and countless adverts describing Black Country businesses."

"For this edition of Ryder's Annual, I have chosen some of my favourite articles, adverts, and photographs from the editions that are to be seen in Wednesbury Library. Some of the images featured in the book are Lower High Street, the Town Hall and Art Gallery, Wednesbury Post Office."

"What I'd say is, this book gives you an idea of what life was like back then, but do speak to granny, before it's too late."

The book costs £9.99.



Miners from Wednesbury, working at a local colliery, in the cage which takes them underground for their shifts

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Jill with her husband Gavin Drake, Saddlers' announcer

Brave rape victim Jill dies at 51 after stroke

THE first rape victim to waive her anonymity and speak out about her attack has died aged 51.

A family statement confirmed Jill Saward, from Hednesford, died at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton last Thursday following a stroke. The mother of three was married to Walsall FC match day announcer and journalist Gavin Drake.

She had spent a lifetime campaigning for the rights of sex attack victims.

She was 21 when she was attacked in March 1986 after a gang broke into her father's vicarage in Ealing, West London. While she was attacked, her boyfriend and father were battered by the intruders.

The attack received widespread attention not just for its brutality, but also due to a comment in the trial when judge Mr Justice Leonard said the trauma suffered by her 'had not been so great'.

Also because three men were jailed but gang leader Robert Horscroft, who did not take part in the rape, got 14 years. The two rapists got lesser sentences.

Martin McCall got just five years for the crime alongside five years for burglary, while Christopher Byrne was jailed for three years for rape and five years for burglary and assault.

Accused

Ms Saward went on to write a book about the attack, which came to be known as the Ealing Vicarage Rape, and campaign on issues including sexual violence and violence against women.

One of her recent battles was against a proposal to give people accused of rape anonymity until they are convicted, saying this implied victims were lying.

Under anonymity rules in place at the time of her case, Ms Saward was not allowed to know the name of her rapist until the day of the court hearing. She said that the shock of learning the name in court distracted her from concentrating on the evidence she had to give.

Born in Liverpool in 1965, she once wrote that she had no issues with being "tagged" as a rape victim, adding: "I make no complaint about this tag as it has enabled me to challenge politicians and work for change."

In a statement her family said: "It is with deep shock and great sadness that we must announce that Jill Saward (Jill Drake) died this morning in New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton, following a subarachnoid haemorrhage on Tuesday. She was 51 years old.

"In consultation with medical staff, the family



Jill's father Rev Saward



Jill Saward, who has died, 51

readily agreed to Jill's desire to be an organ donor. Jill dedicated the past 30 years of her life to helping other people. It gives us great comfort to know that our wonderful wife, mother and sister was able to help other people to the very end. We would like to thank all those who contributed to her medical care in recent days.

"We are also so very grateful for the many expressions of prayer, love and support we have received."

M Saward also helped found campaign group Jurors Understanding Rape Is Essential Standard.

Alison Boydell, from the group, said: "I am overwhelmed with sadness that Juries co-founder and friend, Jill Saward died this morning. Jill was an indefatigable advocate for victim-survivors of sexual violence and dedicated her life to campaigning and raising awareness of rape and sexual violence.

"I miss her terribly. I will do everything in my power to ensure that her work on Juries was not in vain."

While Rape Crisis England & Wales said in a statement: "Jill was courageous, pioneering and an inspiration. She will be sorely missed."

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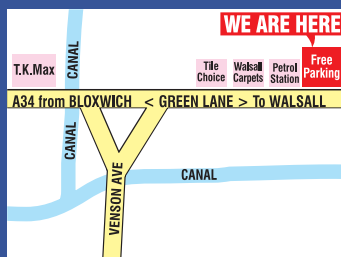
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12 Incorrect figure on diagnoses

The Chronicle Thursday, January 12, 2017

NO children have been diagnosed with HIV over the last five years, Walsall Sexual Health experts have confirmed.

Some people may have been alarmed to see a recent report that claimed 93 children under 16 years of age had been diagnosed as HIV positive between 2011 and 2016.

However, this figure was inaccurate information provided by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust as part of a Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Dr Joseph Arumainayagam, Consultant in Sexual Health at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust said: "We would like to reassure the people of Walsall that the high figure previously reported was incorrect and apologise for any concern this may have caused."

"We'd also like to take this opportunity to encourage all sexually active young people to be screened for sexually transmitted infections."

Police deputy in pledge to root out paedophiles

POLICE will spy on their own officers to root out paedophiles and those who sexually exploit vulnerable victims of crime.

The move by West Midlands Police comes after former constable Allan Richards was jailed for 22 years after sexually abusing boys over 30 years by abusing his position with the force.

Senior officers twice failed to stop him despite complaints and suspicions about his behaviour. Officers and staff who have worked at West Midlands Police for more than 10 years will also undergo new vetting, according to details released by Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe in a report. "West Midlands Police recognises there are a small number of police officers and staff who abuse and exploit vulnerable individuals whom they have come into contact with as part of their role," said Mrs Rolfe.

"The public have an expectation that

everything possible is done to remove the risk posed by similar behaviour. Measures are in place currently within West Midlands Police and Professional Standards Department to tackle this issue. In order to keep pace and reduce this trend, various covert and overt methods have been adopted and some are being developed, some of which are technology-based."

The report, entitled 'Preventing and detecting crimes involving vulnerable people perpetrated by police officers and staff' states it is a priority to re-vet staff in its firearms and the public protection unit. It states: "New recruits to West Midlands Police undergo rigorous vetting checks including checks with the police force where the person currently resides and over the last five years. Additionally specific posts, departments and roles are subject to enhanced vetting checks. The force is currently in the process of re-vetting staff who have been in the organisation for over 10 years."

Sam's dream to walk steps closer

A FUNDRAISING push to help a youngster walk has received a massive boost courtesy of a special party.

Sam Fellows, who is aged five and from Wednesbury, suffers from diplegic cerebral palsy, which causes constant tightness in muscles.

He has been told by top surgeons that he is ready to have a life-changing operation so he can walk. The youngster's mother Jen, 37, and father Simon, 42, are running the Sam's Dreams campaign with the aim of raising £35,000 to cover the cost.

A party at The Saddler's Club, opposite the Bescot Stadium, in Walsall, on December 21, raised £1,050 to boost the appeal over the £26,000 mark.

About 200 people attended a party at The Saddler's Club, opposite the Bescot Stadium, in Walsall, on December 21, and helped edge Sam's Dreams over the £26,000 mark after the do brought in £1,050.

Enjoyed

Britain's Got Talent star Stu Arnold helped sprinkle stardust on the night. Mrs Fellows said: "It was fantastic. Everyone enjoyed themselves."

Sam became a star after he turned on his town's Christmas lights in Wednesbury on November 25.

The campaign was also boosted after the auction of a Suzuki GSX 600 motorbike raised £975 for the pot and further fundraisers will also be held during the next few months.

Mrs Fellows added: "Companies do-



Sam with his father Simon Fellows meeting Britain's Got Talent star Stu Arnold at a fundraising event to help him walk

nating has helped us out and people we had the Wednesbury lights raise £1,000 as well." His mother said her family - along with Sam's sister, Lisa, seven - hopes Sam will be able to visit the 2017 switch-on after his treatment has been completed and he is walking on his own.

Previously the campaign has been boosted after the auction of a Suzuki GSX 600 motorbike raised £975 for the

pot. In October generous footballers turned out for a charity tournament in Wolverhampton, raising about £800 and a sponsored swim by friend Julie Green raked in £1,725. It is hoped Sam, of Park Lane, will have his operation in the spring. The Albert Pritchard Infant School pupil has a fundraiser at Springfield Social Club, Rowley Regis, on February 17. To donate visit www.gofundme.com/22p7ax7s.


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Paramedic faces new wait over job



Paramedic Matthew Geary, aged 38, from Great Wyrley
A PARAMEDIC who failed to help a man dying outside a hospital must wait to find out if his career is over.

Matthew Geary, aged 38, from Great Wyrley, stood with his hands in his pockets as Carl Cope lay on the floor dying from a heart condition outside Walsall Manor Hospital.

Geary was given an eight-month suspended sentence after he admitted failing to undertake his duty and help the patient in the incident on June 23, 2012.

He was given a reprieve by the Health and Care Professions Council last January as a panel ruled he could continue working under a two-year supervision.

The result was appealed by the Professional Standards Authority to the High Court, which ruled that the public interest had not been fully addressed.

On July 22 the High Court sent the case back to the HCPC for a re-determination on the original Conditions of Practice sanction.

It meant Geary was back in front of the same panel on Friday to determine if he can continue as a paramedic.

His case was adjourned until March 10 after questions were raised about the qualifications of the legal assessor at his disciplinary hearing, although Karen Aldred maintains she is rightly qualified having taken advice for the Law Society.

Reduce pay call made instead of tax increase

RESIDENTS have called for senior staff and executives to have their pay cut instead of controversial council tax changes being enforced.

Calls have also been made to reduce the number of councillors in the borough as an alternative to heaping pressure on Walsall's poorest families.

Walsall Council was this week set to wave through plans to change its council tax reduction scheme, meaning struggling residents will have to pay five per cent more council tax.

Currently, the poorest residents only have to pay 25 per cent council tax, but this is set to increase to 30 per cent.

At the same meeting the council is also set to approve wage increases for some of its most senior staff including chief executive Paul Sheehan, who will earn just shy of £200,000 in 2017/18.

Results from a consultation on the council tax reduction scheme show residents have called for decreases in pay for senior staff and in the number of the councillors as alternatives to making the money the proposed council tax change would bring in.

Councillor Mike Bird, who has previously criticised the reduction scheme for being

By Jordan Harris

'discriminatory' for not including under-35s, said that while he understood residents' concerns, drastic measures were needed in order for the council to reach savings targets and deliver a balanced budget.

He said: "I have to say that cutting wages for senior staff or reducing the number of councillors are ideas that have been put forward time and again and really that would bring in very little money."

"We are already losing staff and experience so we need to keep hold of what we have."

The consultation on the tax reduction scheme consisted of a 10,000 household postal survey. In total, 2,315 residents returned the questionnaire, while a further 216 completed an online survey asking the same questions.



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New social worker drive to cost £4m

A CASH-STRAPPED council is set to spend millions of pounds over the next two years as part of efforts to recruit dozens of new social workers.

Walsall Council, which needs to save £86 million over four years, wants to spend £3.8m in 2017/18 and £200,000 the year after recruiting the 40 new members of staff.

The recruitment drive is aimed at helping to reduce the average case load for experienced social workers from 20 to 15 and from 15 to 12 for newly-qualified staff.

The council is also looking to reduce its agency spend on temporary social workers. It hopes to claw back nearly £1m and is forecasted to save £494,000 next year, as well as £227,000 each year for the next two years.

Carol Barton, who is head of safeguarding at the council, has said the authority wants to get social workers doing real social work.

Authority bosses also want social workers to have a more manageable workload and to have a good work-life balance.

She said that with a lower caseload, social workers

Report by Jack Avery

will see children and families more frequently and be more hands-on. Debbie Carter, assistant director for children's services at the council, said that the social worker move was part of a restorative approach.

"We are calling it a case-load promise. I think limit has quite negative connotation's. It's reflective of the restorative approach. A promise is something important – you keep it," she said.

The council's proposed social worker investment is set to be included in its draft budget, which will be finalised next year. The recruitment drive is among a host of other proposed savings and investments which have been out for consultation.

On red alert for deer little brekkie



The robin waiting for his breakfast, taken in the back garden of Diane Simpson in Willenhall

HE waits, perched on a novelty reindeer, waiting for his breakfast on a frosty winter morning.

This picture was perfectly captured by Diane Simpson in the back garden of her Willenhall home. The robin, one of two living in the 61-year-old's garden, is waiting for its meal of live worms to be served.

Mrs Simpson, who lives with husband, retired accountant Albert, in Stonehouse Avenue, used a Nikon D3200 to take the shot. She said: "It was a beautiful morning so I waited for the robin to arrive to take the picture – it came out very well."

Mrs Simpson feeds the robins every day. The reindeer was bought by Mrs Simpson several years ago from Wolverhampton.

She decorated it with a necklace with a bell and placed a berry on its nose. The two robins residing at her home are kept fed every morning by Mrs Simpson.

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Volunteers appeal over NSPCC abuse initiative

PUPILS in Great Barr have been learning to speak out against abuse, as part of an NSPCC project that is looking for new volunteers.

The charity's 'Speak Out. Stay Safe' project teaches schoolchildren aged four to 11 about sexual, emotional and physical abuse and how to report it.

The NSPCC School Service team spoke to Ferndale Primary School pupils from year groups one to six in a special hour-long assembly about how they can keep themselves safe by calling Childline or speaking to a trusted adult.

'Speak Out. Stay Safe' has reached more than 10,000 pupils in Sandwell, and 14,000 in Walsall, since it was launched in 2011. And this school year the NSPCC is hoping to get the message across to more young people than ever before. But the programme needs volunteers to help run sessions at schools.

NSPCC volunteer Jean Nutt, aged 68, led the assembly at Ferndale. She said: "I was a teacher who worked with children with special needs and so when I retired I realised I still wanted to have that link to children and the NSPCC School Service gives me that."

"I have been working as a volunteer for five years now and I realise how important the message is and if we can stop one child from being abused then we have done our job."

Alongside her was Stacey Tanner, 35, who said: "I volunteered because I think it is really important to get our message out there to children. There are children that are experiencing abuse and who don't realise that is it abuse. The message that we put across really helps children to know that there are people out there to support and help them."

Jean added: "That is absolutely why we do it and if you have got a day a



Volunteers Jean Nutt and Stacey Tanner with Naomi Davis and Charlie Swinnton



NSPCC volunteer Jean Nutt leads an assembly at the Great Barr school

week because you need to have a day a week to be able to volunteer to do this role, it is so rewarding to work with the children to listen to what they say and to know that some of the children don't have anyone to talk to. It's a really, really good volunteering role for anyone - men and women."

Ferndale Headteacher Ruth Gillett said: "Having worked with the NSPCC

before, we know of the vital work they do in supporting children at all stages of vulnerability and development."

Naomi Davis, 10, said: "I loved every single bit of the assembly. All the kids learnt how to stay safe and if you don't feel normal it's all right to call Childline."

Charlie Swinnton, 11, said: "I loved the assembly. It was so inspirational."

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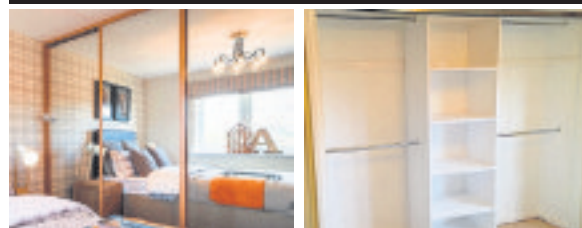
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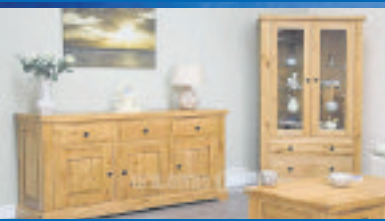
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Sat 20 May	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£89
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Sat 27 May	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
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Sat 17 Jun	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
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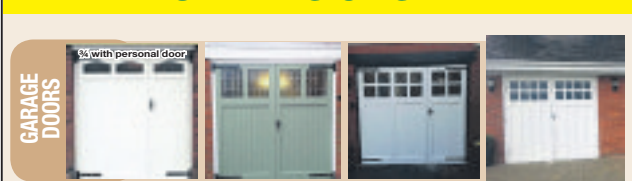
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Single-minded plea by Vaz MP

A BLACK Country politician, who features on a tribute song to the murdered MP Jo Cox, is encouraging residents to buy the single which was released last Friday.

Valerie Vaz, the MP for Walsall North, sings alongside fellows MPs, Steve Harley, Ricky Wilson, KT Tunstall and David Gray on a cover of the Rolling Stones classic 'You Can't Always Get What You Want'. Parliamentary rock group MP4 also feature on the record, with member and Welsh MP Kevin Brennan organising the project.

All money raised through sales of the song will go to the Jo Cox Foundation.

Ms Vaz said: "I was one of a group of MPs from across the parties who took part. The project brought many people together and reflects Jo's belief that more unites us than separates us."

Mrs Cox, a mother-of-two, was attacked by white supremacist Thomas Mair just days before the EU referendum, after campaigning for the UK to remain.

Bucket list hope Matt dies at 21 of cancer

AN 'inspirational' student from the Black Country who wanted to complete his bucket list before he passed away has died of bone cancer.

Matt Greenwood, aged 21, from Walsall, died last month after being diagnosed with the terminal disease in October.

His friends launched a campaign to raise over £50,000 for him so he could complete the list - which included skydiving and road tripping around America.

Matt was originally given between six and nine months to live but the cancer spread from his hip to his lungs.

Matt's friend, Alec John Burns, who planned on shaving his head to raise money towards the bucket list, shared a touching tribute on social media.

Funniest

He said: "The passing of a hero and a dear friend. Matt Greenwood was the kindest, funniest and most spirited person I've ever had the good fortune to meet and I'm glad to have known him."

"He fought to the very end, and I think that perfectly summed him up. My heart goes out to his parents. I've never known a stronger and more supportive family, it isn't fair that such good people have



Matt Greenwood

experienced such heartache. You will be sorely missed my friend, but you will live on through all of us. I love you buddy."

Matt was studying engineering at St Edmund Hall, Oxford.

Other dreams on his bucket list - which he had written out in pen as part of a 13 long list - include visiting Amsterdam, Harry Potter World, South America and learning to ride a bike again.

12ft-wall to cost council £200k after collapse

A 12FT wall that collapsed two years ago could cost council bosses more than £200,000 to rebuild. The wall fell into Stacey Close, Old Hill, in June 2014.

Sandwell Council has now said that it is looking to appoint a contractor to undertake the 'major structural works' in fear that it could collapse and 'lead to serious injury or a fatality'.

The council report states that the anticipated value of the contract is in the region of £239,885.

The wall also fell into the rear of Clyde Street causing neighbouring properties distress.

Orange barriers remained in place following the collapse but concerned resident, Robert Mooney, claimed earlier this year that despite several visits from council officers still nothing was being done.

It was decided in October that Sutton Coldfield Construction will undertake the work.

Mr Mooney spoke of his delight in the matter finally nearing a resolution.

He said: "It has been a three year battle and I am happy that something will be done about this. I have heard that work is expected to start in January, so we shall see."

3,000 police recruit hopefuls

MORE than 3,000 people have applied for 1,150 jobs at West Midlands Police in its latest recruitment drive, it has been revealed. And a third of candidates are from black or ethnic minority backgrounds.

The force is recruiting 800 officers, 150 police community support officers (PCSOs) and 200 specialist staff over the next three years. The Labour Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson and Chief Constable Dave Thompson are keen to see the force's staff and officers reflect the ethnic

Call for 'silent army' to receive council funding

A CALL has been made for a 'silent army' of volunteers to be given council funding, amid claims the sector isn't getting the recognition it deserves. Last year, £180,000 was allocated to Area Partnership Committees to tackle issues across Walsall.

Walsall Council agreed to set up the committees in May 2013, with six put together to work on issues raised by residents. In recent months, these have included the installation of CCTV cameras at fly-tipping hotspots, repair work to community buildings and funding for special community events.

Home owner jumps to flee dryer blaze



The aftermath of the fire caused by a faulty tumble dryer
A HOME owner had to jump from a first floor window after a faulty tumble dryer has caused serious damage to a house in Bloxwich.

No injuries resulted from the fire on Heather Road as fire services were called out to the property yesterday morning at 9.20am, where three engines were called out to tackle the blaze. Fire crews from Bloxwich, Willenhall and Walsall attended, along with an ambulance and the police.

The fire is not being treated as suspicious at this stage. Willenhall Fire Station posted on Facebook: "The fire was caused by a faulty tumble dryer. Never leave your appliances unattended and ensure you are able to escape."

Youngsters turned away due to referrals on rise

A PROJECT finding rooms for homeless young people has run out of places due to a soaring rise in referrals. The YMCA Black Country's Open Door Scheme project has provided 1,500 beds so far this year to vulnerable teenagers who are unable to live with their families.

But now the project has become so busy that young people are having to be turned away as there are not enough host families available to accommodate them.

Project manager Rachael Taylor said: "Our supported lodgings and night-stop schemes provide vulnerable young people with the stability that they need to continue their education. We urgently need more hosts in all areas of the Black Country to meet the growing demand for our service."

Ms Taylor met with Wolverhampton's South West MP Rob Marris who has ex-

pressed his support for the project. Mr Marris was interested to hear how young people need to engage in education or employment to get on the scheme, with dozens enrolling in university.

He said: "Sadly there is a growing problem of homelessness, particularly amongst young people. The main focus should be for the state to make sure there is sufficient accommodation, however in the meantime it falls to organisations like the YMCA to work with concerned citizens to bridge the gap."

The project also held its first Young People's Awards Ceremony at the Wolverhampton Council Chambers on December 7.

MP for Wolverhampton South East, Pat McFadden said: "The commitment offered by host families is really important and I hope more families come forward to take part."

Mr Thompson said: "The expression of interest from black and ethnic minority backgrounds is encouraging and we will see how the process progresses."

The starting salary for new officers will be £22,896, with a minimum of 22 days annual leave.

However, Councillor Doug James has said the committees are 'costly and ineffective' and has asked that the council give funding directly to voluntary groups who he says receive 'little support, recognition or encouragement' from the council.

He said: "In Darlaston we have skilled, talented, generous and hard-working volunteers that make a difference to many people's lives."

"These are friendly and generous local people who give hours and hours of free time to help our communities. We have a silent army of marvellous volunteers."

Committees

"It is disappointing to note how little support, recognition or encouragement our volunteers receive from Walsall Council.

"Money is allocated each year to Area Partnership Committees for local councillors to sit and pontificate on local voluntary sector needs. How many local people, let alone dedicated volunteers ever attend or know about Area Partnership Committees? Their funding should be given directly to the voluntary sector to run their services."

A spokesperson said: "Walsall Council supports the fantastic work done by volunteers within the borough and the difference they make to individuals and communities. The council is committed, with partners, to ensuring that a strong Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Organisation is in place."

makeup of the region. The force was criticised earlier this year when it was revealed just 13 per cent of new recruits were from minority backgrounds compared to 30 per cent of the regional population.

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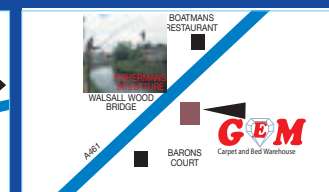
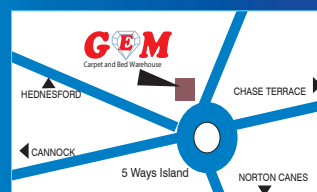
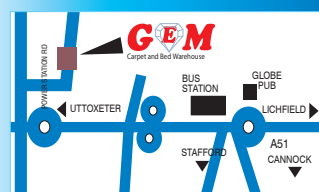
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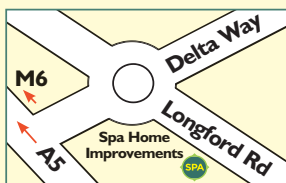


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Electric personalities as couple reach 60th

A DIAMOND couple from Walsall are celebrating 60 long and happy wedded years together.

Avis and William Pinches, who live in Brownhills, met when William was helping one of Avis' friends with electrician work.

Little did they know that after meeting up on a number of occasions, they would go on to get married and be celebrating 60 years together.

The duo, aged 77 and 82 respectively, married on December 1, 1956 at Cannock Registry Office before celebrating at Avis' mother's house with family and friends.

Avis said it was lovely to reach such a big milestone. She said: "It was really nice to celebrate because there's not many people that reach 60 years."

"We got a card off the queen too which was beautiful. I've got it in a frame. We originally met at a friend's house. He was helping him do some electric work and that's how we met."

Avis is originally from Chase Terrace and worked as a shop assistant at the Co-op while William has always lived in Brownhills and was a miner at the Walsall Wood Colliery before working as an electrician.

To celebrate the big day, they went for a lunchtime meal with around 20 family and friends at the Fair Lawns Hotel near Aldridge.

Together, they have two sons Martin, 59 and Paul, 58 as well as a grandson Samuel aged 20.

She added: "We used to like going out but William is not that well these days, he has problem walking."

When asked what the secret to a long and happy marriage together was, Avis said: "I just think making sure you don't have too many arguments and don't fall out before you go to bed. We have 'discussions' as my husband calls them, not arguments."



Celebrating their diamond wedding - Avis and William Pinches from Walsall Wood

'Good' rating joy for pupils

A PRIMARY school is celebrating after inspectors found it has made vast improvements since it was last assessed.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, in Blue Lane East, Walsall, was deemed to require improvement in July 2014 but in October Ofsted inspectors found it had become a 'good' school in all areas. A report states the school has improved, particularly after its executive headteacher Jean Richmond was appointed.

Mrs Richmond said: "We are de-

lighted with the outcome which is a tribute to the commitment, perseverance and care of all who work in the school. The biggest thank you and well done must be given to our pupils who were an absolute credit to both the school and their families. I have worked in so many schools and I must say that the children at St Patrick's are an absolute delight."

Teachers were found to be 'passionate' about improving pupils' outcomes and that they set clear expectations.

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It feels like Lotto win after transplants



Lisa Cook and her partner Andrew Beck who helped her through the ordeal

FOUR years ago Lisa Cook became blind due to a diabetes condition, her marriage broke down and her kidneys began rapidly deteriorating.

She was facing life alone as a disabled person. But she has just seen in 2017 with her sight restored, a new partner who stood by her through the worst of her health troubles, and a new pancreas and kidney which mean she no longer has diabetes.

The 46-year-old Wolverhampton University administrator says she feels like she has won the Lottery. Now she is backing NHS Blood and Transplant's fresh drive to encourage people to join the organ donor register.

There are 6,500 people, including 150 children, on the waiting list for a transplant but a shortage of donors means many never have the life-saving operation. In the past 12 months, 463 people have died waiting.

Lisa's own health problems started 27 years ago when she was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes but the condition was kept under control until she lost her sight as a consequence.

After her husband left, she eventually joined a dating website and met 56-year-old Andrew Beck, a learning disability nurse from Willenhall, who, she says, 'saw me for my personality, not my disability'. Eventually she had an operation to restore her sight - completely in her left eye, but with some distortion still in the other. But not long afterwards she developed cellulitis in her leg and it was during this three-week stay in hospital that doctors found that her kidneys were deteriorating.

She was put on peritoneal dialysis which meant she could carry out the treatment herself at home between 10pm and 6am, allowing her to carry

on working full time. She also went on the transplant list.

But she kept getting sick with peritonitis, each time having to come off the transplant list, until she opted in January 2015 for haemodialysis.

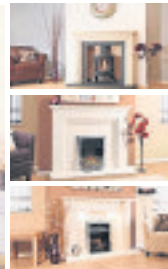
Then at 8am on August 23 last year she received the phone call that was to transform her life. Parents Terry, 77, and Betty, 73, drove from their Burntwood home and took her to Oxford's Churchill Hospital where she was told at 10.30pm, after a day of tests, that she had a match. "I can remember thinking 'oh my God, it's really happening'. All I knew about the donor was that she was a 17-year-old girl. It wasn't right that this young girl had to die to give me a chance."

After four months recuperating from the surgery, Lisa returned to work and the start of a new life, free from sickness and constant dialysis.



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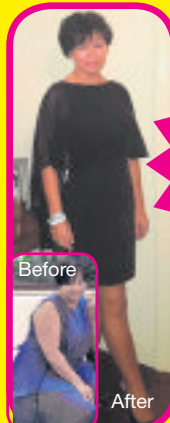
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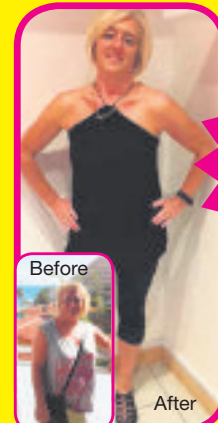
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Homebased Care placed in special measures by CQC

SERIOUS incidents including a person choking and requiring first aid were left unrecorded by a care provider, inspectors found.

Homebased Care has been placed in special measures after an inspection was carried out in October and found its services to be inadequate. A carer allegedly shouted at a person while another being cared for was dropped from a hoist – but bosses at the Walsall-based provider were found to be unaware of the problems.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors found there had been no registered manager at the care firm since February 2014.

Homebased Care, which is based at The Rock Centre Centre in Lichfield Street, was looking after 42 people in October. Most of those were elderly and living with dementia in their own homes.

A staff member told inspectors they had watched online videos to teach them how to safely move and handle their clients because they 'didn't feel able to support people using the training provided'.

Absences

The inspectors' report states: "We did not identify any repeated preventable accidents, however, people were not being sufficiently protected by the provider."

Other staff said there were too few of them to always cover annual leave and sickness, while absences at weekends could load pressure on other carers. The provider was rated inadequate, along with the safety it provided and its leadership. Its effectiveness, way it cared and responsiveness were all found to require improvement.

People cared for by the firm felt most staff had the skills required to support them – but where they lacked

Report by Nathan Briant

mental capacity, inspectors said 'decisions were not always made on their behalf in their best interests'. Director of Homebased Care, Nicola Walker, said the firm is appealing the rating.

She said: "We do not believe it reflects the service we are providing and on that basis we are challenging it. We have been providing care across Walsall since 2005. We have always had a good rating. This was very surprising to us and we are dealing with it through our solicitors."

Medicines records were often 'incomplete' and people might not have received all the ones they required, inspectors said.

Their report stated: "Managers we spoke with were not able to confirm that everyone had received their medicines as prescribed due to poor recording and medicines management systems."

While patients were happy with many of the staff, they 'did not know who the management of the service were and they did not always feel heard by the provider.'

As a result of the service being classed as inadequate and placed in special measures, it will be kept under review and, if the CQC has not proposed to cancel its registration by then, will be visited again in six months.

Smoke billows out of arson-hit house



The Ambrose Close property in Willenhall which was targeted by arsonists just before the New Year

SMOKE was seen billowing out of a bedroom window in Willenhall after a suspected arson attack. The fire happened at a house in Ambrose Close at around 11pm. The house was unoccupied and nobody was hurt.

Fire crews from Willenhall, Bilston and Wolverhampton attended the scene on Thursday December 29. The damage was limited to a bedroom after fast work by firefighters. The window was blackened but there were not scorch marks visible from the outside of the house. Neighbours expressed

their shock at seeing fire engines arrive in the middle of the night.

David Arford, who lives in nearby Cedar Road, said: "I was woken up by all the commotion. There was a lot of smoke, but looking at the house it doesn't seem like the damage is too serious. It's a good job no-one was in there, but it makes you wonder why it was targeted. They must have known no-one was inside. We'll have to wait and see."

Willenhall Fire Station urged people to check their fire alarms and book a

safety appointment if necessary. A statement posted online read: "Willenhall Fire Station red watch along with Bilston Fire Station and Wolverhampton Fire Station dealt with a fire in an unoccupied house. Please ensure you have working smoke alarms in your house, if not call 0800 389 5525 to book your safe and well appointment."

West Midlands Police didn't attend the scene while fire crews were there. But a spokesman said: "It is being treated as arson and investigations are ongoing."

Surgery told to improve by watchdog

A DARLASTON GP surgery with more than 4,000 patients has been told to improve by the health watchdog. The Care Quality Commission rated the Dr Ali and Dr Syed surgery at Darlaston Medical Centre requires improvement as it slammed the surgery for its 'inadequate' safety.

Among a host of failings inspectors found emergency medication missing and a gap in its safeguarding procedures, leaving children at risk.

A report released by inspectors on December 30 after visiting the surgery in August, said: "The practice did not have adequate arrangements in place to respond to emergencies and major incidents."

"Emergency medicines were easily accessible to staff in a secure area of the practice and all staff knew of their location. All the medicines we checked were in date and stored securely. However, we saw that in the absence of medication to enable staff to respond to epileptic fits, acute or severe asthma; severe or recurrent anaphylaxis the practice had not carried out a risk assessment to mitigate risks."

"Although the practice had clearly defined systems, processes and practices in place to keep patients safe and safeguarded the practice were not always following up children who had not attended their hospital appointments."

However despite the failings, the surgery was praised for its effectiveness, responsiveness and level of caring – with the CQC rating it good in all of these categories.

Inspectors praised staff for having the 'skills, knowledge and experience to deliver effective care and treatment' as well as their 'good facilities'. Patients interviewed by inspectors on the day said they were treated with compassion, dignity and respect and they felt involved in decisions about their care and treatment, according to the report. Dr Haris Syed said his surgery had already taken steps to address the CQC's concerns.



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We love to make people happy

He organised a 90th birthday party for Nelson Mandela and married then divorced both Chrissie Hynde and Patsy Kensit.

He leads the most famous Scottish band of all time – Simple Minds have shipped more than 40 million records, scored five number one hits and headlined Wembley Stadium – and also owns a hotel in Sicily. But these days, Jim Kerr doesn't even get recognised when he steps out of his Glasgow flat in the city's south side. It's funny how life changes as you get older. Don't You Forget About Jim.

Jim Kerr is one of the nicest and most erudite men in rock, though some of his ex-band mates might not think so. They'll be back on the road in spring – they headline Birmingham's Symphony Hall on May 17 – but before that there's the small matter of their beautifully conceived and perfectly formed acoustic album.

Simple Minds Acoustic features 15 re-worked tunes from their Imperial Era. There's Chelsea Girl, a reimagined Don't You (Forget About Me) and Glittering Prize and there's a reworked version of Promised You A Miracle, featuring KT Tunstall, alongside a soft-strummed-but-still-ballsy Alive And Kicking. Who knew acoustic music could still sound, well, B.I.G?

Promo

Fans have been asking for an acoustic album since the dawn of time but, until now, he's manfully resisted. Simple question: what changed?

"To be honest, we've been getting asked for this kind of thing since back in the great MTV Unplugged days. It's always been in the air but one of the things that we were always trying to do was to look at new things. We're not great at looking back.

"It came about when we were doing the promo for the last album, Big Music, and Chris Evans, on Radio 2, got us in. He had been a real big fan. He told us to go in and do two or three songs acoustically.

"We bit the bullet and at 7am on the morning we busked about two or three songs."

The reaction was overwhelming. Chris's 11 million listeners were Mad For It, to coin a phrase made popular by Patsy Kensit's subsequent husband. And sure as night follows day, every radio station across Europe wanted a repeat.

Two or three songs on the radio is, of course, different to recording 15 for an album. The idea of an acoustic album was duly shelved and Simple Minds got on with Big Music, their superlative 2014 offering. But while it was easy to ignore the requests to play songs for radio, it was harder to

ignore requests backed with hard cash.

"We were to-ing and fro-ing and then our manager came up to us in the January and, as always, money talks. He said a promoter in Switzerland wanted us to play up a mountain. And he wanted us to play acoustically. So we thought 'great'.

But getting one of Britain's great stadium bands to make music suited to a wine bar wasn't easy. How do you put the Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey-yeah, of Don't You (Forget About Me) on at an acoustic club? Not without reason were Simple Minds lauded for their stadium-friendly anthems.

Jim laughs. "We flitted through songs that we were sure would never work. We had always been swept away with production and a big sound. But when we just went down to the song, I didn't realise there was so much underneath."

Test

They booked a gig in London, deciding to test their acoustic set on unsuspecting fans at Hackney Empire.

"Talk about winging it. People from all over the world wanted to see that and we'd never done it before. Talk about being in it at the deep end. We were totally vulnerable.

"There's a kind of prejudice whenever you say the word 'acoustic'. People imagine two blokes on some stool surrounded by candles. But we didn't want to be little. We've got this thing of having energy and passion on stage. It's acoustic but it's a Simple Minds version, which is dynamic and atmospheric and all of that stuff."

And yet, it could all have been so different. There was a time not so many years ago when Simple Minds couldn't get arrested. They were yesterday's men. All washed up. Out of the game. They'd gone from having three consecutive number one platinum albums, followed by two that reached number two, to scratching about at numbers 141 and 80.

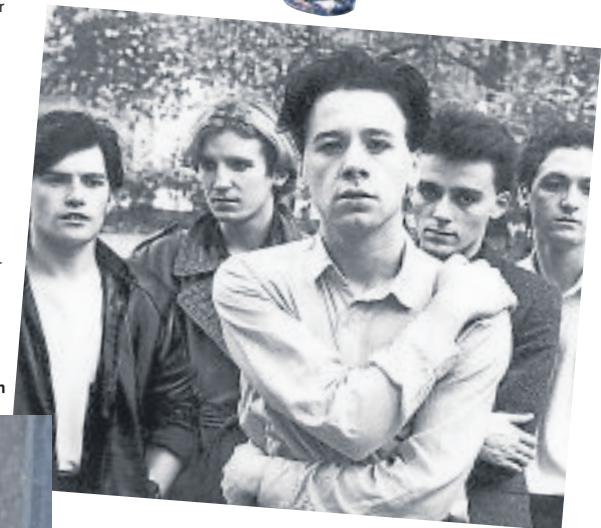
Radar

It would have been easier to call it a day. Jim could have spent his days at his hotel, the Villa Angela, in Sicily. Or, if performance was an itch he really did have to scratch, he could have taken one of the humungous cheques on offer for signing up to an 80s tour.

"We don't have a grudge to bear or anything. For a lot of people Simple Minds were off the radar for a long time and it's hard to get back on it when you've been off it."

So how did they do it? Jim's answer is simple: "Hard work. We've worked the last 10-12 years trying to do quality stuff. A lot of people have wondered why we'd bothered. But we love our story and the position we're in and we love our catalogue. We have different types of fans and for the hardcore, they want to see the band evolving."

Andy Richardson



Simple success – the band formed in the late 70s



Don't you forget – Charlie Burchill with Jim Kerr



Great minds – five number one albums

Lucky Sevenfold's dreams come true



Californian rockers Avenged Sevenfold promise a spectacular show involving space and artificial intelligence when they play

BACK when they were 17, they dreamed of headlining festivals and playing alongside Metallica.

Eighteen years later, Avenged Sevenfold are friends with Metallica and have headlined Download Festival.

The Californian rock giants play the Genting Arena in Birmingham on Friday, January 13, supported by heavy metal icons Disturbed. They first performed in the UK in 2004. "Ever since then, the UK has been a special place for us," said lead singer Matt 'M' Shadows.

Of that first tour - which saw the group play the O2 Academy in Birmingham - he says: "We had a little Sprinter van, in which we would spend nine or 10 hour

drives just staring at each other. Then we'd hop out and play a show." Though Matt looks the hardened rocker, with his muscular tattooed body, he is also a devoted father. "I've got a two-year-old and a four-year-old. The four-year-old comes with us to shows but the two-year-old's a maniac - he's just nuts," laughed Matt.

Looking to the band's Birmingham show, Matt said the band had come up with something 'completely different'. "We've worked on something using space and artificial intelligence. We're super excited because the UK is going to be the first place to experience it. We'll be locked and loaded and ready for the show."

For the full interview by Kirsten Rawlins, visit www.expressandstar.com/entertainment/



Boss praises bluesy Ana

GUITAR-SLINGING blues songstress Ana Popovic brings her smoky blend of funk, jazz and blues to Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Tuesday.

She has been described as 'one helluva a guitar player' by Bruce Springsteen and ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons said 'Ana rocks the blues in fine, fine fashion'. The 40-year-old Serbian singer has been nominated for five Blues Music Awards and is a major star on the contemporary blues scene. Her albums, including Still Making History, Can You Stand The Heat and Unconditional, have featured in the US blues charts. She joined the likes of Buddy Guy, Eric Johnson and Zakk Wylde on the recent tribute tour celebrating the music of Jimi Hendrix.

Ana now lives in Memphis USA but was born in Belgrade. She grabbed her father's guitar at the age of 15 and began learning from his impressive blues and soul record collection.

She formed her first band, Hush, 20 years ago in Belgrade but the group disbanded after she left her homeland to study jazz in the Netherlands. Soon afterwards she was contributing to a Hendrix tribute album alongside Taj Mahal and former Animals frontman Eric Burdon. She released her first solo album, Hush!, on a German label. Her love of the blues led her to America.

Ana is endorsed by Fender and has shared stages with BB King, Buddy Guy, Joe Bonamassa and many others. Her latest album, Trilogy, was released last May. Tickets cost £15 in advance or £17 on the door and the venue opens at 7.30pm. Visit www.therobin.co.uk or call 01902 401211.

Ex-Deep Purple star ready to rock Robin

ROCKER Glenn Hughes is to return to the West Midlands later this month.

Cannock-born singer Hughes, of legendary band Deep Purple and the voice of The KLF's hit What Time Is Love?, is to take to the stage at the Robin 2 venue in Bilston on Monday, January 23.

The US-based rock star, who also fronted popular early 1970s Wolverhampton band Trapeze, in recent years was singer and bassist with rock supergroup Black Country Communion.

Hughes will be supported by Wall-ban band Stone Broken who were voted runners-up in the Best New Band category of the annual Planet Rock Awards 2016. The first band are on stage at 8pm.

Tickets cost £22.50 in advance or £24.50 on the door. Contact the box office on 01902 401 211 or visit www.therobin.co.uk

Lots of dance delight with the Strictly stars

STRICTLY Come Dancing The Live Tour kicks off in Birmingham on Friday, January 20, with five performances over three days.

These feature stars of the 2016 show, including Ed 'Gangnam Style' Balls and glitterball winner Ore Oduba with his new dancer partner Karen Clifton.

There is lots more dance delight in the offing for ballroom and latin fans this month. Brendan Cole brings his new show All Night Long to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on January 26.

Then Anton du Beke and Erin Boag are joined by Strictly singer Lance Ellington for Swing Time at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on January 28.

Ballet fans can look forward to the annual visit by the Russian State Ballet of Siberia to the Grand, February 5 to 7, with The Nutcracker, Swan Lake and Coppelia.

Busy gig scene sees 2017 get off to a flyer

GOSSIP Girl actress Taylor Momsen brings her band The Pretty Reckless to Birmingham's O2 Institute next Friday, January 20, and Irish indie rockers Two Door Cinema Club have sold out their concert at the O2 Academy in the second city on January 24.

White Buffalo, AKA Jake Smith, plays the Institute 26 on January 21, the same night King Creosote (Kenni Anderson) is at Birmingham Town Hall. Watch out for rising star Declan McKenna at the Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, on January 25.

Major concerts for blues fans include Ana Popovic (see above) at the Robin 2 on Tuesday and the Bilston venue then hosts the Aynsley Lister Band on Thursday and Lil' Jimmy Reed on January 24.

Finally, veteran Aussie guitar great Tommy Emmanuel performs his It's Never Too Late album at Birmingham Town Hall on January 20.

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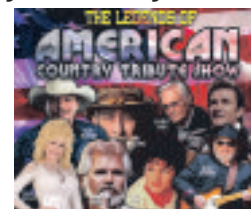
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CHOICE



Tom Hardy
Taboo (BBC1, 9.15pm)
James Delaney's shocking return to London society has set tongues wagging, but the swarthy adventurer's mission is far from complete. The city's residents view him with hostility and suspicion, but undeterred by their derision, James begins to enlist allies in his quest to reclaim his legacy and establish a new life for himself. However, an unexpected arrival at the reading of his father's will threatens to disrupt James's plans, and the true, poisonous nature of his new-found inheritance makes itself known. Historical drama, starring Tom Hardy, Leo Bill, Jessie Buckley, Oona Chaplin, Richard Dixon, Mark Gatiss, Jefferson Hall and David Hayman.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen. **11.30** The Best Dishes Ever. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News. Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.20** BBC News. **5.30** Regional Programme. **5.40** Celebrity Mastermind.
6.10 **Pointless Celebrities.** Jilly Goolden, Olly Smith, Sophie Grison Michael Caines, Fay Maschler, Brian Turner, Cyrus Todivawa and Tony Singh compete in a "food and drink" edition of the unorthodox quiz.
7.00 **Let It Shine.** Graham Norton and Mel Giedroyc's mission to assemble a new boyband for a nation-touring musical continues. This time, the hopeful stars continue with their solo auditions in front of a studio audience in Manchester. Judges Gary Barlow, Dannii Minogue, Martin Kemp and Amber Riley must decide whether any of the would-be pop princes are worthy of a place in Let It Shine's five-strong headline act, while Graham and Mel keep viewers up to date with all the backstage action, fun and gossip.
8.25 **Casualty.** A scuffle at an illegal rave leads an over-enthusiastic sergeant causing serious head injuries to a 19-year-old man and later planting drugs in his belongings to corroborate his claim that he had been assaulted there by his quarry. Jacob is dubious about the sergeant's story and takes a police constable to one side in an attempt to persuade her not to be an accomplice to her superior's crooked ways. Elsewhere, Ellie's career is on the line as Connie goes on the warpath.
9.15 **Taboo.** James Delaney sets about enlisting allies to help him reclaim his legacy, but an unexpected arrival at the reading of his father's will threatens to disrupt his plans.
10.15 **BBC News:** Weather; National Lottery Update.
10.30 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents action from the latest Premier League matches, including Leicester City v Chelsea at the King Power Stadium and Swansea City v Arsenal at the Liberty Stadium.
12.00 **Film:** The Ring. (2002) **1.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.45 **Film:** Higher and Higher. (1943) Musical comedy, with Jack Haley and Frank Sinatra. **8.15** **Film:** The Magic Box. (1951) Biopic of cinema pioneer William Friese-Greene, starring Robert Donat. **10.00** Secret Britain. (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Exploring China: A Culinary Adventure. (R) **1.00** **Film:** Ice Station Zebra. (1968) An American submarine crew races to reach a Soviet satellite that has crash-landed near a British research station in the Arctic. Adventure, with Rock Hudson and Patrick McGeehan. **3.20** Flog It! (R) **4.00** Mastermind. (R) **4.30** University Challenge. (R) **5.00** Only Connect. (R) **5.30** The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. (R)
6.30 **Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise.** Exploring the forests, plains and bustling cities of Central Thailand, an area known as the nation's rice bowl. The programme explores how people live alongside animals in these areas, and the spiritual fulfillment to be found in these relationships. Narrated by Sophie Okonedo. (R)
7.30 **Britain's Ancient Capital: Secrets of Orkney.** Neil Oliver, Chris Packham, Andy Torbet and Shini Somara investigate recent archaeological finds on the archipelago that challenge the received wisdom on Stone Age Britain, joining hundreds of archaeologists from around the world who have gathered in the Orkneys at one of Europe's biggest digs. (R)
8.30 **Dad's Army.** Captain Mainwaring puts the defence of the realm before personal pride, resulting in him nearly losing command of the platoon. Classic comedy with the Home Guard, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier. (R)
9.00 **Imagine: Marlon Brando.** Alan Yentob presents another documentary from the worlds of art and culture.
10.40 **Film: On the Waterfront.** (1954) A former boxer reduced to working for a gangster has his conscience pricked when he sees his boss's thugs kill a man. Drama, starring Marlon Brando, Lee J Cobb and Eva Marie Saint.
12.25 **Film:** Lay the Favorite. (2012) A Las Vegas cocktail waitress proves a success as a professional gambler, but arouses the jealousy of her mentor's wife. Comedy, starring Rebecca Hall. **1.50** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.30** Scrambled! Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled! Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55** Scrambled! Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled! The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled! Bear Grylls Survival School. **9.05** Scrambled! Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Rebound. (R) **10.25** Guess This House. (R) **11.25** Judge Rinder. (R) **12.30** ITV News. Weather. **12.40** River Monsters. (R) **1.10** Bargain Shop Wars. (R) **1.40** **Film:** The Mummy Returns. (2001) Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Brendan Fraser. **4.05** Dance Dance Dance. (R) **5.35** Regional Programme. **5.45** ITV News. Weather.
6.00 **The Brits Are Coming.**
7.00 **Ninja Warrior UK.** Competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara.
8.00 **The Voice UK.** The spinning-chair singing contest continues, as another selection of would-be stars put their musical skills to the test via the ears of new coach line-up Jennifer Hudson, Gavin Rossdale, Will.i.am and Tom Jones, who are tasked with selecting more acts to champion in the blind auditions. Sitting with their backs to the prospective pop- icons, the coaches select the ones they like based on their vocal abilities alone, but as always, it remains to be seen whether this batch of contestants will have what it takes to reach the end of the contest and claim that lucrative record contract with Polydor. Emma Willis is on hand to oversee proceedings.
9.30 **Through the Keyhole.** Keith Lemon challenges Eamonn Holmes, Emma Bunton and Jonathan Ross to guess the identities of the celebrities whose homes he peruses.
10.30 **ITV News:** Weather.
10.45 **Film: Terminator 2: Judgment Day.** (1991) Sci-fi adventure sequel.
1.15 Jackpot247. **3.00** Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **9.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** The Simpsons. (R) **11.25** The Simpsons. (R) **11.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **12.55** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **2.00** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. The eighth day of the BDO World Championships.
6.30 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Penelope Keith's Hidden Villages.** Penelope Keith starts her journey in the Cotswolds, and explores the celebrated village of Bibury, as well as Kelmscott, the home of William Morris; Slade, the village setting of a book by Laurie Lee; Down Ampney, and Hook Norton. Plus, she visits a village fête in Ebbington. (R)
8.00 **Great Canal Journeys.** Timothy West and Prunella Scales embark on more watery adventures, beginning 14 miles west of Venice on the Brenta, a river that was first canalised in the 13th century. Lined with palaces which were once holiday homes for Venetian nobility, they follow the route that Casanova and Lord Byron took to the city. After crossing the Venetian lagoon, Tim and Pru arrive at St Mark's Square, where they escape the busy Grand Canal and discover the tranquility and beauty of the smaller canals that tourists rarely see. (R)
9.00 **Film: Oblivion.** (2013) A repairman is assigned to salvage the remaining resources from Earth, which has been left a devastated wasteland after a war with an alien race. He discovers a human survivor on the surface of the planet, an encounter that exposes secrets from the past that threaten the future of the human race. Sci-fi adventure, starring Tom Cruise and Morgan Freeman.
11.30 **Film: Immortals.** (2011) A man is chosen by the Greek gods to prevent a power-mad king from conquering the human and immortal worlds. Mythological adventure, with Henry Cavill.
1.35 Hollyoaks. **3.35** Win It Cook It. (R) **4.05** Hoarder SOS. (R) **5.00** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.10** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **9.45** Big Bash Cricket Live. **1.30** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **2.30** Budgies Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **3.30** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **4.25** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 3. (R) **5.25** Kittens Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R)
6.25 **NCIS: Los Angeles.** Sam goes undercover as a bomb specialist when he investigates the death of a demolition expert, but faces a race against time to find explosives located across LA.
7.10 **NCIS: Los Angeles.** The team investigates when a reporter is murdered as she prepares to break a story about a mysterious Libyan freedom fighter named El-Libi.
8.00 **NCIS.** Gibbs throws himself back into his work following his near-death experience, updating his appearance and tackling a new risky case alongside DEA agent Luis Mitchell, who wants help bringing down a drugs cartel. Concerned about his colleague's apparent enthusiasm to re-enter the field, DiNozzo discovers Mitchell is the son of a former NCIS agent who gave his life trying to save Gibbs' late wife and daughter, and this attachment is causing Gibbs to break his own rule against personal involvement in a case. However, danger is posed by Benson Long, the cartel's head, and Mitchell's top target.
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.00 **Football on 5: The Championship.** George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce action from the latest fixtures, which included Bristol City v Cardiff City at Ashton Gate, Fulham v Barnsley at Craven Cottage, and Rotherham United v Norwich City at AESSEAL New York Stadium.
10.00 **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce all the goals from the latest matches in Leagues One and Two, including Walsall v Sheffield United, and Plymouth Argyle v Stevenage.
10.30 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother.
11.30 **Lip Sync Battle UK: Alexander Armstrong vs Jimmy Carr.** (R) **12.00** SuperCasino. **3.05** Celebrity Big Brother. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Timeshift: The Golden Age of Coach Travel. **8.00** Inside Chernobyl's Mega Tomb. **9.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America. **10.00** The Young Montalbano. **11.45** Top of the Pops: 1983-12.20 Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance. **1.20** Later Presents - Elvis Costello in Concert. **2.20** Great Guitar Riffs at the BBC. **3.20** Close
ITV2
11.20 The Big Quiz - Coronation Street v Emmerdale. **12.55** Ninja Warrior UK. **1.30** 50 Greatest Harry Potter Moments. **3.05** **Film:** Horrid Henry: The Movie (2011) **4.05** FYI Daily. **4.10** **Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **4.55** **Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **6.45** **Film:** The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **7.45** FYI Daily. **7.50** **Film:** The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **9.30** **Film:** Wanted (2008) **10.30** FYI Daily. **10.35** **Film:** Wanted (2008) **11.40** Family Guy. **1.05** American Dad! **2.00** Dads **2.20** Sawford **3.00** Teleshopping
ITV3
11.25 **Film:** Hidden Treasure (2001) **1.30** A Touch of Frost. **6.00** Midsomer Murders. **8.00** Doc Martin. **9.00** Midsomer Murders. **11.00** Lewis. **1.00** Blue Murder. **2.00** ITVs Nightscreen. **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
11.00 Pawn Stars. **11.30** **Film:** Apache (1954) **12.35** FYI Daily. **12.40** **Film:** Apache (1954) **1.20** Nijinsky's Triple Crown. **1.30** ITV Racing Live from Warwick and Kempton Park. **4.00** **Film:** Red River (1948) **5.05** FYI Daily. **5.10** **Film:** Red River (1948) **6.40** Pawn Stars. **7.05** Mr Bean. **8.10** River Monsters. **9.15** **Film:** The Client (1994) **10.20** FYI Daily. **10.25** **Film:** The Client (1994) **11.40** **Film:** Don't Say a Word (2001) **12.50** FYI Daily. **12.55** **Film:** Don't Say a Word (2001) **2.00** Hell on Wheels. **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen
E4
11.25 Baby Daddy. **12.00** Black-ish. **1.00** Young & Hungry. **2.00** The Goldbergs. **4.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine. **5.00** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** **Film:** Friends with Benefits (2011) **11.15** Gogglebox. **1.25** The Inbetweeners. **2.25** Cheving Gum. **2.50** Tattoo Fixers. **3.45** Bad Robots. **4.10** Suburgatory. **4.50** Revenge
Film4
11.00 The Black Arrow (1948) **1.00** The Jane Austen Book Club (2007) **3.05** First Daughter (2004) **5.15** The Spy Next Door (2010) **7.00** Legend (1985) **9.00** The Family (2013) **11.15** Blue Ruin (2014) **1.00** Bully (2011) **3.20** Close

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CHOICE



Stephen McGann

Call the Midwife: The Casebook (BBC1, 5.05pm)

Stephen McGann presents a look at the true stories behind the drama series, meeting midwives, nuns and doctors who worked delivering babies during the 1950s and 1960s to hear their accounts of the social and medical changes of the period. He talks to a former colleague of Jennifer Worth, writer of the original Call the Midwife books, and a photographer who documented the social conditions of the time. Stephen also returns to the home where he was born to share his mother's own story of childbirth.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 7.30 Match of the Day. (R) **9.00 The Andrew Marr Show. 10.00 The Big Questions. 11.00 Regional Programme. 12.15 Bargain Hunt.** (R) **1.00 BBC News: Weather. 1.15 Homes Under the Hammer. (R) 2.00 Wanted Down Under Revisited. (R) 2.45 Escape to the Country. (R) 3.30 Spy in the Wild. (R) 4.30 Songs of Praise. 5.05 Call the Midwife: The Casebook.**

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. The programme comes from Carmarthenshire, where Matt Baker explores the history of the region's sand dunes and Helen Skelton visits the National Botanic Garden of Wales, where she discovers how bees are being prepared for winter and reports on a plan to map the DNA of all the UK's flowers. Plus, Falklands veteran Simon Weston presents a guide to South Wales, Tom Heap looks at how otters pose a threat to fisheries, and Adam Henson presents the second of two reports on farming in New Zealand. Including weather for the week ahead.

7.30 Antiques Roadshow Holocaust Memorial. Fiona Bruce and the team examine items connected to the Holocaust and listen to the personal stories of survivors. Plus, a look at the work of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation.

8.30 Still Open All Hours. David Jason stars as Granville in this follow-up to Open All Hours, now running the shop with his son Leroy after inheriting the business from Arkwright.

9.00 Sherlock. Sherlock and John face their greatest challenge as the duo's long-buried secrets come to light and a threat from the past seems to have returned from the dead. They discover an elusive enemy has been playing a very long game – which is now reaching its devastating conclusion. Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman star in the conclusion of the fourth series of the detective drama. Last in the series.

10.30 BBC News.

10.50 Regional Programme.

11.00 The Graham Norton Show. (R)

11.45 The Celebrity Apprentice USA.

1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead. 1.15 BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.00 Big Dreams Small Spaces.** (R) **8.00 An Island Parish. (R) 8.30 The Edible Garden. (R) 9.00 Countryfile. (R) 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. 11.30 Talking Snooker. 12.15 MOTD2 Extra. 1.00 Live Snooker: The Masters.** Ronnie O'Sullivan v Liang Wenbo. **5.15 Yellowstone: The Toughest Spring.** (R)

6.15 Ski Sunday. Highlights of the men's World Cup downhill on the Lauberhorn in Wengen, Switzerland. Plus, a feature on Swiss freerider Jeremie Heitz.

7.00 City in the Sky. Dallas Campbell and Dr Hannah Fry present a documentary exploring aviation, beginning with a look at the challenges of getting aircraft into the air. The programme features a visit to the world's busiest airport to discover the work that goes into getting its millions of visitors off the ground. Plus, the construction of the world's largest passenger plane and the dangers of taking off from the coldest city on Earth, (R)

8.00 Dragons' Den. Evan Davis ushers another batch of would-be entrepreneurs before the panel's judgement. An inventor who claims to have created a new kind of surfboard and a parachute for Nasa reveals his idea for transforming the garden shed, Touker Suleyman agrees to road test a waxing product, and one applicant makes a shocking revelation as he tells the story of sleeping on his office floor.

9.00 Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise. The mountains and forests of Northern Thailand, where unusual partnerships develop between animals and people. Last in the series.

10.00 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring Manchester United v Liverpool at Old Trafford and Everton v Manchester City at Goodison Park.

10.50 QI XL. Guests Matt Lucas, Jerry Springer and Carlad Lloyd join regular panellist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig to contemplate the theme 'noodles' in this extended episode.

11.35 Snooker: The Masters. Ding Junhui v Kyren Wilson. Hazel Irvine presents action.

12.25 Snooker: The Masters – Extra.

2.25 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **3.25 Holby City. (R) 4.25 This Is BBC Two.**

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. 6.10 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) 6.25 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) 6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) 6.45 Sooty. (R) 6.55 Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) 7.00 Super 4. (R) 7.15 Oddbods. (R) 7.20 Oddbods. (R) 7.30 Scrambled!: Scrambled! 7.35 Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) 7.55 Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) 8.10 Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) 8.30 Scrambled!: Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors. 9.05 Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) 9.25 ITV News. 9.30 Countryfile. (R) 10.00 Peston on Sunday. 11.00 Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy. (R) 11.30 Chopping Block. (R) 12.30 ITV News: Weather. 12.35 Judge Rinder. (R) 1.35 Tipping Point. (R) 2.35 Ninja Warrior UK. (R) 3.35 The Voice UK. (R) 5.05 Regional Programme : Weather. 5.15 ITV News: Weather. 5.30 The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.30 Dance Dance Dance. Alesha Dixon and Will Best host the second stage of the celebrity dance contest, in which the contestants must impress judges Ashley Banjo, Tina Landon and Timor Steffens by recreating famous music videos by Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears – as well as a classic scene from the Blues Brothers.

8.00 Endeavour. The leader of a censorship campaign comes to Oxford on a speaking tour, and Morse is charged with protecting her in light of a series of death threats. A bricklayer working on a controversial pop singer's house is later found dead, and when a second killing occurs, a connection emerges to the speaker's movement, plunging Morse into the middle of a conflict over the nature of British culture.

10.00 ITV News: Weather.

10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with ITV News National Editor Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.15 The Brits Are Coming. A special live show announcing which artists are in the running to receive gongs at this year's Brit Award ceremony. Includes performances by Olly Murs, Craig David and more. (R)

12.15 Jackpot247. Interactive gaming. **3.00 Chopping Block. (R) 3.50 ITV Nightscreen. 5.05 The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)**

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The King of Queens. (R) 6.45 The King of Queens. (R) 7.10 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.35 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.30 Frasier. (R) 9.00 Frasier. (R) 9.30 Sunday Brunch. 12.30 The Simpsons. (R) 12.55 The Simpsons. (R) 1.25 The Simpsons. (R) 1.55 Film: St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold. (2009) Comedy sequel, starring Rupert Everett. 3.55 Channel 4 News. 4.15 Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. The men's final of the BDO World Championships.

8.00 Walking the Americas. The second leg of Levison Wood's four-month trek across Central America involves walking for 400 miles and travelling through three different countries. He visits a unique Caribbean town that is populated by the descendants of shipwrecked African slaves, treks through a mountain range, and makes his way through gang territories in one of the world's most violent cities.

9.00 Film: Bad Neighbours. (2014) Premiere. A couple living in suburbia and adjusting to new parenthood are determined to prove they can still be cool when a household of students moves in next door. However, when their raucous neighbours' wild parties disrupt their lives, they decide to fight back, leading to a vicious cycle of one-upmanship. Comedy, starring Seth Rogen, Zac Efron and Rose Byrne.

10.50 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jimmy Carr hosts, as Sean Lock and Stephen Mangan team up against Noel Fielding and Fay Ripley. The Brett Domino Trio assist Susie Dent in Dictionary Corner. (R)

11.55 Film: Hanna. (2011) A teenage girl trained by her father to be an assassin travels the world on a secret mission, pursued by the CIA. Action thriller, with Saoirse Ronan and Cate Blanchett.

1.55 How to Lose Weight Well. Dr Xand van Tulleken and dietician Hala El-Shafie help a duo slim down for a birthday bash in seven days, and water-only fasts are investigated. (R) **2.50 The Autistic Gardener.** The team tries to make a small garden look bigger. (R) **3.45 Jamie's Comfort Food.** Jamie Oliver prepares comfort fish pie. **3.55 Location, Location, Location. (R) 5.50 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R)**

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. 6.05 Milkshake! Bop Box. (R) 6.10 Peppa Pig. (R) 6.15 Angelina Ballerina. (R) 6.25 Bob the Builder. (R) 6.40 Wanda and the Alien. (R) 6.50 Zack and Quack. (R) 7.00 Seaside Antics. (R) 7.05 Fireman Sam. (R) 7.15 Pip Ahoy! (R) 7.30 Little Princess. (R) 7.40 Paw Patrol. (R) 7.55 Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) 8.25 Noddy in Toyland. (R) 8.40 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) 8.55 Shimmer and Shine. (R) 9.20 Peppa Pig. (R) 9.30 Peppa Pig. (R) 9.40 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) 9.55 The Fairly OddParents. (R) 10.30 Football on 5: The Championship. (R) 11.25 Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) 12.00 Funniest Fails, Fails & Flops. (R) 12.25 Film: Message in a Bottle. (1999) Romantic drama, with Kevin Costner and Robin Wright. 2.50 Film: Six Days Seven Nights. (1998) Romantic adventure, starring Harrison Ford and Anne Heche. 4.45 Film: You've Got Mail. (1998) Romantic comedy, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

7.00 Now That's Funny! A collection of internet-sourced videos with a family friendly hoo, featuring laugh-out-loud unexpected personal moments now being shared with the world. (R)

8.00 Brides Make You Laugh Out Loud. Iain Lee narrates a collection of internet videos featuring bizarre and humorous weddings.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. A chance to catch up with the latest events inside the house as the celebrities cope with living under constant surveillance, with all the arguments and alliances, as well as the revelations in the diary room.

10.05 Celebrity Botched Up Bodies. Alex Reid undergoes surgery on his nose to help his breathing, while Georgie Shore's Marnie Simpson discusses how her breast enhancement went badly wrong.

11.05 The Roast of Donald Trump. An event from 2011 in which the business mogul faces a barrage of insults from Seth MacFarlane, Gilbert Gottfried, Whitney Cummings, Snoo Doggy, Larry King and Marlee Matlin. (R)

12.35 Impractical Jokers UK. 1.00 SuperCasino. 3.10 Film: Under the Tuscan Sun. (2003) 4.50 Divine Designs. (R) 5.40 Angels of Jarm. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 David Starkey's Music & Monarchy

8.00 Sword, Musket & Machine Gun: Britain's Armed History **9.00 Rich Hall's Presidential Grudge Match** **10.30 Bowie at the BBC** **11.30 John Berger: The Art of Looking** **12.25 Sound of Musicals** with Neil Brand **1.25 Lost Kingdoms of Central America** **2.25 Roger Bannister: Everest on the Track** **3.25 Close**

ITV2

1.40 2Awesome: Side Effects **2.20 2Awesome: Third Wheel** **2.40 2Awesome: LA Story** **3.00 Film: Space Jam** (1996) **4.00 FYI Daily** **4.05 Film: Space Jam** (1996) **4.45 Film: Despicable Me 2** (2013) **5.45 FYI Daily** **5.50 Film: Despicable Me 2** (2013) **6.45 Film: The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey** (2012) **7.45 FYI Daily** **7.50 Film: The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey** (2012) **10.00 Family Guy** **11.55 American Dad!** **12.55 The Cleveland Show** **1.50 Totally Bonkers** **Guinness World Records** **2.15 Teleshopping** **5.45 ITV2 Nightscreen**

ITV3

2.05 A Touch of Frost **4.20 Film: Columbo: How to Dial a Murder** (1978) **6.00 Midsomer Murders** **8.00 This Time Next Year** **9.00 Tonight at the London Palladium** **10.00 Birds of a Feather** **10.30 Film: The English Patient** (1996) **11.35 FYI Daily** **11.40 Film: The English Patient** (1996) **1.40 A Touch of Frost** **3.35 May the Best House Win** **5.20 You're Only Young** **Twice** **5.40 ITV3 Nightscreen**

ITV4

4.35 Film: The Dam Busters (1954) **5.35 FYI Daily** **5.40 Film: The Dam Busters** (1954) **7.10 When Ali Came to Britain** **8.15 Film: Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol** (1987) **9.15 FYI Daily** **9.20 Film: Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol** (1987) **10.00 Film: Maximum Conviction** (2012) **11.00 FYI Daily** **11.05 Film: Maximum Conviction** (2012) **12.05 River Monsters** **1.10 Hell on Wheels** **2.05 I Want That Car** **2.55 ITV4 Nightscreen** **3.00 Teleshopping**

E4

2.20 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.30 The Goldberg's** **5.00 The Big Bang Theory** **8.00 Film: Johnny English Reborn** (2011) **10.05 Tattoo Fixers** **11.10 Virtually Famous** **12.00 The Inbetweeners** **1.05 Gogglebox** **2.10 Rude Tube: Ultimate Stunts** **3.05 Rude Tube**

Film4

11.00 The Frogmen (1951) **1.00 One Fine Day** (1996) **3.10 Sword of Sherwood Forest** (1960) **4.50 Flight of the Navigator** (1986) **6.35 Beautiful Creatures** (2013) **9.00 Prometheus** (2012)

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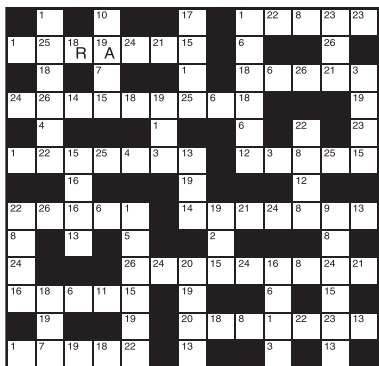
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BRAIN GYM No.411

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

N	T	V	H	A	W	K	C	R	X	U	E	O
S	D	Z	Q	J	L	M	I	F	P	B	Y	G

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

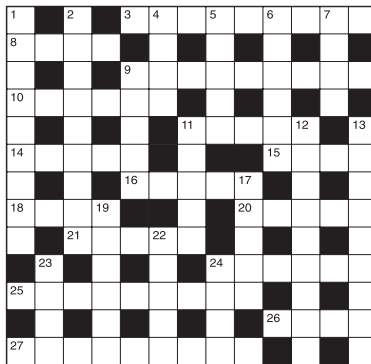
Cryptic Clues:

Across

3. Foreign food - make the GP eat this! (9)
8. Proper ones appear in the real estate market (4)
9. Governors, i.e., as a ruler (9)
10. This will smooth out the wave (6)
11. It's mounted when differently set by the editor (5)
14. The yarn in the novel is legendary (5)
15. Give heed to a brief message (4)
16. Refer to another court to pardon (5)
18. The boy to assume an attitude of prayer, we hear (4)
20. Spills associated with tenanted houses (5)
21. One in a strange set makes a quotation (5)
24. Maid to spoil a Scotsman! (6)
25. One in unspoil surroundings, like a bachelor (9)
26. Avoid a colloquial word of command (4)
27. The stage property is a toy (9)

Down

1. To disturb the fish is alarming (9)
2. True to life, but it is clear there's change (9)
4. Inferior alternative to the Post Office (4)
5. One who is entertained arrived at the right conclusion, one hears (5)
6. One by one (6)
7. Closely follows title quotations (4)
9. One who tacks together a waste disposal unit (5)
11. Distress call about mother returning to Greek island (5)
12. Thorough antonym of up left! (9)
13. Finding a logical cause, as one is upset in the arena (9)
17. Walk on the imprint of a tyre (5)
19. Illustrious one undefined prayer of supplication (6)
22. There's no start to famine - this produces food (5)
23. In the Mediterranean I loved the colour (4)
24. The average man who's tight-fisted is (4)
27. Dispute (9)



Quick Clues:

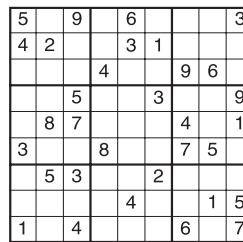
Across

3. Pen-name (9)
8. Detail (4)
9. In utter poverty (9)
10. Diminish (6)
11. Maxim (5)
14. Foster (5)
15. Authentic (4)
16. Dance (5)
18. Retailled (4)
20. Well (5)
21. Give up (5)
24. Drive (6)
25. Harmonize (9)
26. Daybreak (4)
27. Dispute (9)

Down

1. Fiddler (9)
2. Unhurried (9)
4. Observed (4)
5. Unfasten (5)
6. Start (6)
7. Abominable snowman (4)
9. Postpone (5)
11. Shy (5)
12. Celebrating victory (9)
13. Deadly (9)
17. Burning (5)
19. Repudiate (6)
22. Regional (5)
23. Equipment (4)
24. Plot (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	1	8	5	4	7	3	9	6
5	9	6	2	1	3	4	8	7
4	3	7	8	9	1	5	2	6
9	6	2	8	5	1	7	3	4
8	7	5	3	2	4	9	6	1
1	4	3	7	9	6	8	2	5
3	5	4	9	7	2	6	1	8
6	8	1	4	3	5	2	7	9
7	2	9	1	6	8	5	4	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Away; 3 Trophies; 8 Vert: 9 Imparted; 11 Consequences; 13 Treary; 14 Salami; 17 Reinvestment; 20 Latitude; 21 Dock; 22 Believer; 23 Sells. Down: 1 Advocate; 2 Arrange; 4 Rumpus; 5 Plain facts; 6 In the; 7 Side; 10 Getting the; 12 Mistakes; 15 Anemone; 16 Needle; 18 Exot; 19 Club. QUICK - Across: 1 Pult; 3 Badinage; 8 Rich; 9 Protrude; 11 Affectionate; 13 Career; 14 Divide; 17 Impertinence; 20 Take away; 21 Aboed; 22 Horseman; 23 Bear. Down: 1 Parfance; 2 Lucifer; 4 Araid; 5 Intentions; 6 Adult; 7 Eden; 10 Accelerate; 12 Defender; 15 Ignoble; 16 Strata; 18 Maker; 19 Itch.

Quiz

1. What does the M stand for in JMW Turner?
2. What do we call a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation?
3. Which actor's first names are John Uhler III?
4. Which plant has bird's-foot and hop varieties?
5. By which king was the inch defined in statute?
6. In which year was Greenpeace founded?
7. To which region was Cain exiled after he had killed Abel?
8. In which country are the Plains of Abraham?
9. Which city lies on the north side of the Firth of Tay?
10. To which flower family does vanilla belong?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Pig; 2 David Blunkett; 3 Imperial

War Museum; 4 W C Fields; 5 North

Atlantic; 6 Dandelion; 7 God Save the

Queen; 8 Kevin Keegan; 9 Phil Spector;

10 Ink blots.

Niner: COUNTRIES

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

18223654 gives a jewel,
24859 gives a second jewel,
169678 gives a crystalline compound.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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What's New in 2017

Fri 10th - Mon 13th Mar - Comedy Weekend at Pontins, Sand Bay Resort - Daily Tea Dances, visit Highfields Garden Centre en route and Gloucester Quays shopping outlet on your return journey. ½ price drinks on one selected evening. Fantastic Value Break £96.00pp*

Sat 18th - Sun 19th Mar - Faulty Towers Comedy Show - London Weekend, 3 course meal included during your show. Based at the Quality Inn, Wembley. Optional evening's entertainment at the Irish Bar! We also take in historic Windsor on our journey to London. Fun weekend at only £149.50pp*

Fri 7th - Mon 10th Apr - The English Riviera - Babbacombe 4 days, 3 nights half Board at The De La Mer Hotel. Day excursions to Teignmouth, Brixham and Torquay are also included. We visit historic Exeter on our return journey. Only £176.00*

Fri 21st - Mon 24th Apr - Paris and Monet's Garden, 4 days, 3 nights B & B at the 4 star Novotel. Excursions to Paris, Monet's Garden and Giverny - Take in the serenity of the River Seine before relaxing in Paris. We also visit the former home of Claude Monet and its beautiful gardens. Includes Eurotunnel crossing - executive coach travel and admission to Monet's gardens. Only £245.00* Passport/Euro's required

Fri 26th - Monday 29th May - Hadrian's Wall and Bamburgh. Situated a stone's throw from Hadrian's Wall the Gisland Hall Hotel is an ideal base to explore the wonderful scenery. Your holiday includes visits to Carlisle, Gretna Green, the stunningly attractive village of Bamburgh famed for its castle and historic Lancaster on our journey home. Not to be missed - Only £245.00pp*

Fri 2nd - Mon 5th June - Bruges and Ypres - Bruges, the capital of West Flanders is distinguished by its canals, cobbled Streets and medieval buildings. Excursions to Ypres, Ghent and Ostend, Eurotunnel Crossing and taxes are all included in the cost of your holiday. Please join us as we witness the emotional Last Post at the Menin Gate. A memorable holiday for only £266.00pp*

Mon 24th - Fri 29th July - Waterford, Killarney & Dublin

Please join us for the 'Craic' as we take in the delights of the Emerald Isle. Based at the Evis-ton House Hotel in the heart of Killarney this is a great place to explore. We take in The Kingdom of Kerry, Dublin, Blarney Castle and much more. Whether it's Kissing the Blarney Stone or riding the famous Irish Jaunting Cars this is a holiday not to be missed. Only £416.00pp*

Fri 8th - Sun 10th Sept - Blackpool Illuminations and Fireworks Display 3 days - 2 nights half board at the ever popular Cam brae with entertainment - Free time in Blackpool - leisure time at the award winning Trentham Gardens on our return journey. Only £145.00pp* (Limited single rooms without supplement)

Fri 13th - Mon 16th Oct - Bournemouth Autumn Tints

Based at the historic Victorian Durlay Dean Hotel situated close to the award winning beach - 3 days - 2 nights half board - Excursions to Poole and Swanage - Free bar between 7 - 9pm - We also visit Winchester on our return Journey. Only £226.00pp*

Fri 17th - Mon 20th Nov - Turkey & Tinsal at the Monterey Beach Hotel Christmas has come early as we enjoy the festivities at the Monterey Beach Hotel close to Lytham St Annes. Mince Pies, Crackers and a visit from Santa on this fun filled weekend. Complimentary drink - 4 day-3 nights' accommodation - Evening entertainment - We visit the award winning Trentham Gardens on our return journey to pick up your Mistletoe! Only £189.00* (Limited single rooms without supplement)

Mon 27th - Fri 1st Dec - Valkenburg Christmas Market

Held in the famous underground Grotto Valkenburg Christmas market is a fantastic place to be. 5 day - 4 nights half board accommodation - Day excursion to Leige, the largest festive market in Belgium. Your break takes in Holland, Germany and Belgium. Excursion to the Illuminated trees and fairy lights of Monschau. Only £296.00*

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25th Mar	- London 'Do as you Please'	£23.00
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19th Apr	- An American in Paris - London Theatre	£75.00
19th Apr	- DreamGirls the Musical - London Theatre	£75.00
23rd Apr	- Brecon Mountain Railway	£33.50
29th Apr	- Kensington Palace 'Diana, Her Fashion Story'	£37.50
6th May	- Hull, City of Culture - The Weeping Window	£24.00
7th May	- Emmerdale 'The Tour'	£44.00
17th June	- Cliff Richard in Concert at Eastnor Castle	£99.00
14th July	- Olly Murs in Concert at Northampton Arena	£79.50
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An angel overlooks Lake Malaren, Sormland



The picturesque town of Mariefred



Dawn over Lake Malaren in Mariefred, Sormland



Maria Printz, owner of the Printz bakery in Stallarholmen

How Sweden harnesses delight of simple but joyous traditions

WINNING a Nobel Prize could arguably be the best Christmas present of all. But not for lyricist Bob Dylan, one of this year's best-known laureates.

"He won't even be coming to the ceremony," my taxi driver complains as we whirl through snow-dusted cobbled streets below Stockholm's City Hall. He has other plans, apparently."

Three days after the grand December 10 banquet, honoured guests are woken from their rooms at the prestigious Grand Hotel by singing angels carrying candles, part of the St Lucia tradition. It's fair to say Mr Tambourine Man won't be in their repertoire. . . No matter; the show will go on.

Swedes honour traditions with clockwork precision, something I discover on a week-end winter break to their capital city and its

Sarah Marshall reports

surrounding areas. Fleeing the commercialised circus of high-street chaos, I surface in a world of clean, crisp sophistication, where flashing rainbow lights and tacky tinsel are superseded by simple lingonberry wreaths and the flickering gold flames of advent candles.

It's Christmas time, and the markets have sprung up in the city. One of the most atmospheric is held at Hovstallet, the Royal Stable. Stooping in a loose-fitting tartan blazer, equerry Lars shows me the king's private property, which is open for public tours throughout the year.

"This is Stockholm's best kept secret," he whispers, as we weave through ornate royal carriages and past pedigree horses nuzzling into their mangers, entering a room filled with 38 gleaming harnesses.

"Every year, two are flown by hand luggage to your Buckingham Palace, where skilled craftsmen make repairs," Lars tells me. "We give the horses these jingle bells to wear in winter so they can be heard by traffic when the sound of their hooves is deadened by snow."

Inventive

As the morning wears on, shoppers pour into the sky-lit Riding Hall and a labyrinth of stables, where stalls sell national favourites such as smoked fish, marzipan pigs and a parade of inventive condiments.

Sheepskin rugs and cushions spiral with tight silky curls, and toy elves peer from an unkempt tangle of felt and wool. Ice scrapers with knitted handles are my novelty gift find of the day. Most people are gathering goods for their Christmas table. But to discover an even greater selection of produce,

I head to the bread basket region of Sormland, a 45-minute journey from Stockholm by train. Residents of Stallarholmen are hosting a Charles Dickens-themed market, with carol singers gathered around a log fire and aromas of roast pork.

Gregarious baker Maria Printz is doing a roaring trade in sticky cinnamon buns and saffron cakes, traditionally eaten at this time of year.

Many of the local meats, cheeses and smoked fish make their way into a traditional julbord (a Swedish smorgasbord) served at Gripsholms Vardshus, a cosy inn located in nearby Mariefred. Vodka-infused salmon, herring pickled with fennel, and a salty roast gammon are all highlights.

I learn more about the origins of this former Viking settlement at the Callanderska Garden folklore centre, a 274-year-old red clapperboard house.

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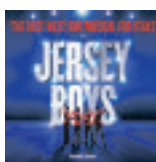
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Country cottage in a village location

In a secluded location, Lakeside Cottage in Newtown, Great Wyrley, is a very pretty three-bedroomed property in a village location.

Deceptively spacious, yet still with potential to extend, it is for sale through Webbs at £365,000 with no chain. A beautifully presented and impressive family home, it is close to all local amenities and good schools.

In brief, this spacious and generously-proportioned family home has accommodation comprising an entrance porch, inner hallway, a guest WC, a lounge, a dining room, a conservatory, a re-fitted kitchen, three bedrooms and a re-fitted shower-room. There is a private driveway, landscaped secluded gardens and side garage. The landscaped rear garden has patio, lawn, water feature and summer house.

The property is approached via an electric wrought iron gates with secure intercom access leading to extensive private block paved driveway and landscaped grounds.

In more detail, the inner hallway has doors off to storage cupboard, lounge and dining room.

The lounge has a window to the front, a feature fireplace with gas fire, a window to the side, stairs off to the first floor and French doors to the conservatory, which in turn has French doors to the garden.

The dining room has a feature fireplace and French doors to the re-fitted kitchen. This overlooks the rear garden and includes an integrated dishwasher, washing machine, fridge freezer and 'Rangemaster' range oven with extractor hood over, tiling to splash backs and a door to the side.

Off the first floor landing, the master bedroom overlooks the rear and has access to a sun terrace/balcony, a range of fitted wardrobes and a newly fitted en-suite shower room.

Bedroom two overlooks the frontage of the property and has fitted wardrobes. Bedroom three has a window overlooking the rear garden.

The re-fitted luxury shower room includes a double cabin steam/spa shower with Bluetooth, music streaming and lighting and a wall towel radiator.

Outside the garage has bi-folding door access, a sky light, two built in storage cupboards, a utility area and a door to the landscaped rear garden.

GREAT WYRLEY £365,000



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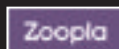
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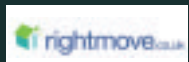
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DV6P2HZH	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI CR Laurin & Klement (150bhp) DSG Automatic	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Brilliant Silver Metallic 4,500 miles	E209
DV6JGUJ	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI CR Laurin & Klement (150bhp) DSG Automatic	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Candide White 5,500 miles	E209
DV60E0C	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI CR Laurin & Klement (150bhp) DSG Automatic	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Candide White 4,500 miles	E209
DV6PCFP	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI CR White (184bhp) DSG Automatic	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Candide White 3,200 miles	E204
DV6BEXK	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI CR (184bhp)	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Brilliant Silver Metallic 4,500 miles	E189
DV6UEGD	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI SE L (150PS)	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Brilliant Silver Metallic 4,500 miles	E189
DV6UWZK	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI SE L (150PS)	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Brilliant Silver Metallic 4,500 miles	E179
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5	Door Diesel Hatchback Candide Red 5,000 miles	E169
DV6H4ZK	Skoda Octavia 1.6 TDI SE L (150PS)	
5	Door Diesel Hatchback Candide Red 5,000 miles	E144
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DV6W1ZK	Skoda Octavia 2.0 TDI SE L (150PS)	
5	Door Diesel Estate Range Blue Metallic 5,000 miles	E199
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MOTORING

This four-legged spider brings smiles all the way

By John Griffiths

In recent years Fiat has spearheaded its revival by going back for the future: drawing on its iconic '500' tag to help popularise not one but a whole range of thoroughly modern motors from a cute city car to an SUV.

So its latest offering is an contemporary take on its two-seater sports car from the 1980s in the form of the 124 Spider, albeit a very different proposition. Most people like an honest, relatively simple drop-top and with its Italian styling the new Spider is undoubtedly a very pretty example.

But underneath is Japanese engine and chassis technology from the Mazda MX-5, the car which kept the flame of the affordable sports car alive virtually single-handed and was rewarded by becoming the single best-seller in the field by some margin.

Add Fiat's new turbocharged 1.4 litre engine and it's a winning combination – the 140bhp test car was capable of doing the 0 to 62mph dash in 7.5 seconds and managed an overall 43mpg.

Looks, performance and reasonable running costs from a car which starts from under £20,000. You can hardly ask for more.

Hardcore

If you want, or can afford, to pay more you can go for the 170bhp Abarth version which is a more hardcore proposition, with uprated suspension too.

The Spider is well equipped with the latest technological trappings such as a central touchscreen control for navigation, audio, connectivity and other functions, with remote controls on the adjustable steering wheel.

It also has the classic luxury with large, well shaped leather sports seats and – essential to such a car – an easy to remove fabric roof. It's manual operation: you can't sit there with your finger on a button and impress those behind you in the traffic jam but you can release the locking mechanism and let it drop back into its allotted storage area an awful lot quicker. About two seconds, in fact, rather than 20 or 30 and it also saves weight as well as money and room, so you still have a boot worthy of the name: about 140 litres which is enough, for example, of a couple of typical 'carry-on' wheelee cases at least.

The 1.4 litre engine is impressive. Not only in outright power terms, but also its impressive 240Nm of torque thanks to the turbo: all that's available from 2,250rpm which, along with the car's light weight, contributes to that brisk initial acceleration.

It's no less impressive for 'in-gear' performance either. Prepare to be surprised the first time you change down for a quick overtake. The exhaust is tuned to produce a crescendo of snarling fury under acceleration – it would hardly be a sports car without that – but while cruising in top it abates to an audible but not intrusive growl which is less wearing on long trips.



Stylish rear-wheel drop-top that is so pretty and also a great drive

The Spider scores highly here: its engine and excellent dynamics make it a lot of fun when required, but it's altogether more civilised for a journey. Those leather seats are excellent too as I can attest after spending over four hours behind the wheel (most of which was spent in a mammoth motorway jam) and emerging without a twinge in these old bones.

For those who haven't experienced rear wheel drive, it adds a real sense of involvement to the driving experience, while modern suspension electronics in the form of traction and stability controls eliminate the worst excesses of the genre seen in older examples of the genre (ie a loose rear end).

The suspension is firmish but still almost surprisingly compliant, softening the bumps on typical British B roads without rattling your teeth or wandering off track.

The steering is quick and positive, helping the car to turn in quickly and maintain its line through the corners. The brakes (discs all round) and powerful without being so sharp they're likely to stand the car on its nose.

The gearbox – modified from the Mazda original to allow for the turbo's extra torque – is a slick six-speed example, with short throw and a positive feel which allows changes as rapidly as the driver can co-ordinate hand/foot movements.

Electric front windows, front and side airbags, climate control and cruise control are standard, with a reversing camera and parking radar on all but base models. That's

a useful option, as like most two seats rear three-quarters visibility is limited with the roof up. Direct rear vision isn't an issue as the rear window is glass and heated (older readers will remember the days of rapidly yellowing perspex in this role).

As for running costs, the Spider's official fuel average is 44.1mpg which equates to a CO2 rating of 148g/km for tax purposes. The standard car's insurance rating is 25/26E with the Abarth version rated three groups higher.

When Fiat signed its deal with Mazda to use the MX-5 underpinnings it was undoubtedly a shrewd move. It was, after all, taking some of the best bits from the acclaimed best-selling two-seater and saving on research and development costs which helps to keep the 124 Spider affordable. But the end result is no Japanese clone but actually a significantly different car with its entirely new (and rather pretty) body, the different character of the 1.4 turbo engine and some gearbox and suspension tweaks.

It is clearly a thoroughly modern and highly competent car with technologies our fathers and grandfathers couldn't have dreamed of.

But, no matter how hard you try, you can't avoid taking a look in the rear view mirror to a golden age when the front-engined, rear wheel drive drop top (many of them British!) ruled the roads, their pictures plastered across the bedroom walls of a generation of schoolboys.

The 124 Spider in many ways builds a bridge between the two worlds, creating many a smile along the way.

Benefits of switch to four-wheel drive

Icy roads, floods and muddy tracks can all prove too much for conventionally driven cars, which is why a switch to a 4x4 can be a smart move. Here are a few reasons to change to all-wheel drive.

1. The fuel costs aren't as bad as you'd think

Traditionally, a four-wheel drive version of a standard car would cause a negative effect on its economy. However, with modern cars the deficit isn't as harsh as you'd think. Of course, there is a slight drop in terms of economy, but for the most part you won't notice too much of an increase in fuel usage.

Many modern off-landers can actively switch between two- and four-wheel drive, meaning that when on smooth roads, they can be driven by just two wheels. When the car notices a loss of traction, it will instantly re-engage another wheel to stop the car sliding. This system contributes to better fuel economy.

2. Four-wheel drive technology makes a car more versatile

If you're looking to tow a caravan, there's a good chance you've already considered a four-wheel drive. It is especially useful



in slippery conditions, when towing can become a more difficult task. It'll also prove invaluable to people who need to tow horse boxes, as it'll give better traction on the road.

Cars such as the new Volkswagen Amarok feature 'tow assist' technology, which uses a range of cameras situated along the edge of the car to display to the

driver where a caravan or horsebox is likely to end up if it carries on with the same line. Some also display guidelines on the screen, which can make reversing a larger unit a little bit easier.

3. Improved traction

This is arguably the key reason why anyone would purchase a car with four-wheel drive. Thanks to the fact the engine

sends its power to all four wheels, this allows for much more grip – especially on wet, icy or loose surfaces. During the colder winter months, this added stability can really give you that extra peace of mind when driving in less-than-perfect conditions.

Not only will four-wheel drive help you navigate corners with more confidence, it also allows your vehicle to get its power down more effectively, meaning you can get off the line faster.

Some four-wheel drive cars come fitted with locking differentials and low-range gear boxes as well, which make it that bit easier to climb steep, slippery slopes.

4. The technology can be applied to almost any shape of car

It isn't just massive SUVs that can benefit from the added grip and stability of a four-wheel drive system. This style of drivetrain can also be fitted to hatchbacks such as the BMW 1-Series xDrive, estate cars such as Subaru Levorg and saloons such as the Audi A6. This means, if you're looking for that added piece of mind four-wheel drive brings, you don't always need to find it while behind the wheel of a large SUV.

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Snooker champion Reanne Evans



Priory Park Boxing Club chairman Paul Gough with Dudley North MP Ian Austin

Sports stars grow from grassroots

SPORTING FEATURE

NICK ELWELL looks at some of the local sports stars who made the headlines in 2016

TEENAGERS Charlotte Breen and Katy Murmanis began the new year with Georgia on their minds.

The talented Tettenhall and Black Country Volleyball Club players were selected to play for England in their European Under-19 clashes with Georgia and Belarus.

Bilbrook Junior FC had cause for celebration in January after landing a £400,000 windfall from the FA, to be used on a new changing pavilion and improved pitches.

In February, Wednesfield Aces became the first cycle speedway club to receive money from Sport England with £6,000 to help fund coaching courses and new equipment. Meanwhile, East Park Wolves cycle speedway club marked their milestone 10th anniversary.

Wolverhampton and Bilston AC duo Ellis Greatrex and Psalm Roberts-Nash, both 16, claimed first and second in the 400m at both the Welsh Under-20 and senior championships.

Crowned

Sandwell's Kimura Shukokai Portway Karate team had 13 members called up by England for the World Championships in Berlin. In the boxing ring, Merridale BC's Akash Tugir, 17, was crowned champion at the England Youth Championships in Rotherham.

Halesowen's Laura Barker, 22, became a golden girl in the +70kg category at the British National Pro Jiu Jitsu Championships in London.

In March, 13-year-old Bloxwich jiu jitsu ace Lewis Newman, of Simkin Martial Arts Academy in Walsall, struck gold in the Pan-American Championships in class two of medium heavyweight division at Long Beach, California.

Wodensborough Boxing Club's Lauren Johnson landed the English middleweight title.

Dudley electrician Scott Palmer was called up to represent Great Britain at the European Sprint Duathlon in Germany. Year 10 and 11 girls from Coppice Performing Arts School were crowned national futsal champions.

Cannock's Zac Evans was buzzing after winning the EKF European Welterweight title, defeating Jean Marie Pierak



Jeweller Aaron Sheldon and auctioneer Ben Gamble with the Wednesbury Charity Cup

at the Lincoln Fight Factory. April saw the covers come off Springhill Cricket Club's new pavilion, while girl power ruled on a historic night for the Wolverhampton Sunday Football League as four female officials took charge of the Harry Round Cup final for the first time.

Halesowen Athletic Club honoured their most famous runner. A plaque was unveiled in Somers Square while the drive at the Abbey Stadium was named after Jack Price, who ran in the 1908 Olympic marathon in London and led the formation of the club in the 1920s.

Former England rugby captain and RFU chairman Bill Beaumont was guest of honour at a special dinner to commemorate Willenhall Rugby Club's 50th anniversary.

Women's world snooker champion Reanne Evans lifted

the Staffs and West Midlands League Individual Championship in May. Wodensborough BC's Benjamin Whittaker, 18, lifted the England Elite middleweight title, days after selection for the England podium squad. Snooker star Mark Allen checked into Bilston's Golden Cue club to help pocket £2,500 for Dudley Mind and the Deanesley Centre at New Cross Hospital.

Stourbridge karate ace Liam Reynolds was crowned an English champion at the age of 10. Meanwhile, 3 Hammers Golf claimed the Critchley Award from the Golf Foundation for its work in encouraging youngsters to take up the sport.

Walking football took centre stage at Molineux, while Wednesbury 11-year-olds Amillia Baker and Kirsty Maull

smashed their way to a national table tennis title. Former world champion Ken Doherty was the guest of honour at the Stourbridge Snooker League annual awards night. Penn Cricket Club took the wraps off their new £70,000 clubhouse and £25,000 state-of-the-art net facility.

Legendary football scout Les Green called time on his days of talent spotting at the age of 77.

Another former snooker champion, John Parrott, was guest of honour for the Staffs and West Midlands League awards night. Priory Park Boxing Club's new-look gym was opened in the presence of MP Ian Austin.

Wolverhampton University's Walsall campus was the venue for the Black Country School Games, featuring more than 1,400 youngsters.

Cyril Hockham took to the green at Willenhall Trinity Bowls Club to celebrate his 100th birthday in July.

Fordhouses under-13 cricketers were the pride of Staffordshire, becoming Nat West Club County champions.

The Dudley & Cradley Heath League was forced to blow the final whistle after a 106 years of competition.

Another local football league, the Wolverhampton Combination, admitted defeat in its battle to continue, after 113 years.

Powered

Halesowen Cricket Club landed their first major piece of silverware in 14 years in September, lifting the WCB Canterbury Cup at New Road.

Willenhall Trinity Bowls Club clinched their first-ever Staffordshire club competition, while Burntwood's Last Chance Saloon powered to the Great Britain Tug of War Federation Championship.

Landywood player Jack Harris potted his way to victory over snooker legend Jimmy White in a charity exhibition at Bilston's Golden Cue for the Paul Hunter Foundation.

In October, former New Zealand cricketer Jeremy Coney was the guest of honour as Netherton Cricket Club rounded off their 150th anniversary year with a dinner at Dudley's Village Hotel.

Aldridge cricketer Robert Steadman, a 16-year-old all-rounder, was named Young Volunteer of the Year at the NatWest Outstanding Service to Cricket Awards at Lord's. In November, Burntwood racer Lloyd Shelley defended his Formula 600 title and winning the Sound of Thunder Class, while Kamila Czartolomna's powerboating success reaped reward for South Staffs SC in December.

Wood Green Athletic were celebrating a £1,000 windfall thanks to the sale of a 136-year-old Wednesbury Cup at auction. Willenhall Rugby Club stalwart Elfyn Pugh was honoured with a lifetime achievement award by the RFU.



John Cheetham, Ian Bonser, Rob Bluck, Harrison Worley and Will Dunn, of 3 Hammers golf complex



Officials Lucy Berridge, Zoe Barch, Lisa-Maria Lane and Emily Aldridge line up for the Harry Round Cup Final



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Banks's turns into boxing battleground

ERROL Johnson's Black Country Boxing returns to Walsall next month with a four-fight Boxing Dinner Show at the Banks's Stadium.

'Battleground' features a quartet of undefeated boxers on the February 17 card.

Hod Halesowen prospect Lennox Clarke is in action as he looks to secure a title shot in 2017. The 25 year-old is unbeaten in 14 professional contests and has set his sights on a showdown with English Super Middleweight Champion Jahmaine Smyle. 'Dangerous' Clarke was ringside in November when Smyle retained his belt with a split decision victory over Leon McKenzie.

Talented Lichfield flyweight Brad Foster is also in action. 'The Blade' has recorded five straight professional victories since making the switch from kick boxing 12 months ago. The 19-year-old recently signed a three-year promotional contract with Frank Warren and, after securing nine world titles in kickboxing, is looking to reach world level as a boxer. Foster will enjoy a six round tune-up.

Former amateur star Connor Parker will be looking to build on his recent impressive professional debut when he fights in the paid ranks for just the second time. The Swadlincoote super lightweight debuted in Tewkesbury in December and will be looking to make waves in the professional ranks in 2017.

West Bromwich light heavyweight prospect Joshua Stokes completes the card. Josh, brother of undefeated mid-weight prospect Tom, will make his professional debut after a solid amateur career with Wodensborough ABC.

Standard tickets for 'Battleground', priced at £35, are available by calling the boxers, £60 VIP tickets for tables of 10, with two-course meal, are available by calling Walsall FC on 01922 651414/416.

Smith sees red as Pics suffer defeat

Workington 2 Rushall Olympic 0
RUSHALL Olympic's first game of 2017 ended in disappointment with a 2-0 reverse at Workington.

There was a chance for the hosts with just two minutes on the clock when Connor Tinnion played through Jack Ryan who was denied by a great double save from Jose Veiga.

With 11 minutes on the clock a header from Scott Allison landed just wide for the home side.

But two goals in as many minutes put the hosts well in command. A Tinnion free-kick was headed home by Kyle May on 36 minutes before Tinnion swept home the second.

On a miserable day for The Pics, Lee Smith was sent off on 52 minutes for a two-footed challenge.

Lockmen are denied

Ellesmere Rangers 2 Willenhall Town 2
WILLENHALL were made to pay for a lack of finishing power in this West Midlands Premier League game.

Mark Habbershaw gave the Lockmen the lead, a deflected Jamie Haynes goal levelled, Cory Pearce made it 2-1, but Connor Hughes headed in late on.

Meese spot-on as Khalsa make history

Sporting Khalsa 1 Tring Athletic 0 (FA Vase Third Round)

A DAVE Meese penalty on 77 minutes ultimately decided a tight cup tie, with Sporting Khalsa progressing to the last 16 of the FA Vase.

With both sides on course to make club history with a win, it was little wonder the match was played in an atmosphere of tension and pressure.

Khalsa had the best of the early skirmishes and two early corners gave opportunities for Mike Perks and Brad Lawley, but they were narrowly unable to convert.

The visitors successfully shifted the momentum as the half progressed, their brand of sharp

counter-attacking football – inevitably led by Kieron Turner on the right flank – cutting the home side open on a number of occasions.

On 39 minutes, Khalsa keeper Tom Turner pulled off two good saves to keep the stalemate intact, first tipping over a chip from Luke Dunstan and then producing an even better stop to deny Chris Stapleton from the resulting corner.

Initiative

The second half saw the visitors seize the early initiative, a fine cross by Tommy Twelves on the right flank was just out of reach for Turner at the far post while at the other end Tes Robin-

son headed over from a Johnny Haynes corner. With the spectre of extra time looming – and a potentially hefty away trip for a replay – there was little in the way of clear-cut action.

That was, however, until Luke Shearer twisted and turned into the Tring box and was brought down, meaning Khalsa's top scorer Meese was able to finish in style from the spot.

With the game moving into injury time, Dave O'Connor was sent off for Tring for a horror tackle, sparking a 21-man coming together which might have resulted in any number of outcomes, but a caution for Mike Perks was the only punishment dished out.

Eight on trot as leaders are toppled

Trentham RFC 16 Bloxwich RFC 21
THIS superb away victory at table-toppers Trentham made it eight consecutive league wins for Bloxwich.

Trentham kicked off only to be rocked onto their heels after a strong Bloxwich return and good hands, capped off by Brad Russell's 30-yard scoring run. Sean Bottomer converted to give Bloxwich a 7-0 lead within the opening minutes.

This early statement allowed Bloxwich to settle into their game plan, and produced another scoring chance but was ruled out when flying winger Richard Whetton was deemed to have knocked on as he grounded the ball.

Trentham built some phases of their own, and their pressure drew a penalty which was converted.

When Sean Bottomer converted his own try, Bloxwich took a 14-3 lead, which they held at half-time.

Trentham started the second half strongly and nudged themselves into a 16-14 lead through a converted try and two penalties.

Skipper Richard Geary's leadership re-focused Bloxwich into finding another gear. The back row responded by gaining turnover possession in the Trentham 22 and rewarding Bloxwich with a penalty. Unfortunately the kick went the wrong side of the post, and allowed Trentham to clear with a 22 drop out.

This was run back by Gareth Maclean and moved along the back line to Chris Thomas, who put in a well executed kick to force an error from the home team near to their try line.

The Bloxwich front row forced Trentham into two restarts at the scrum. A third scrum produced yet more pressure and a score for Bloxwich, when number eight Jack Hunt showed a cool head to control the ball and time his pounce for the line and with the last kick of the game Sean Bottomer converted.

Wood now looking for home comforts

Lye Town 2 Walsall Wood 0
LYE stayed in touch with leaders Alvechurch with this hard-fought victory over resurgent Wood.

Wood threatened first, Alex Dallison putting in a block on Joey Butlin.

But on 25 minutes a right wing free kick was delivered to the far post and Jack Pearlman got in a header just inside the post to open the scoring.

Dallison headed home at the far post to double his side's lead on 52.

Wood face six home games on the trot before travelling to St Andrew's on Saturday, January 28 to complete the fixture list for the month.

The Chronicle, a Midlands News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Katley, Telford, Thursday, January 12, 2017



RECORD BOOKS ARE REWRITTEN

Walsall 110 Shrewsbury 0

THE Walsall squad sent a strong message to the rest of the league with this superb display at Delves Road – running in 16 tries to completely overwhelm Shrewsbury.

The scoring spree started after just two minutes as centre Rob Angell went over near the posts. Winger Jeffrey Williamson ran in the next try, followed by the third, from Jack Crowhurst.

Ethan Walker was next on the scoresheet as Walsall dominated, with scrum half Neil Pittaway then touching down.

The final ten minutes of the half saw the hosts score four more tries, from Walker, Matt Wood, Williamson and hooker Pete Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald secured the first score of the second half and winger Walker ran in another straight from the restart.

Consolation

The visitors then had their best period of the game as they pressed for a consolation score. They had already lost, through injury, their strong running full back, Dylan Christie. But captain Lewis Jenkins and No8 Liam Deery tried hard to make a breakthrough.

But as the game moved into the final quarter, Walker and Wood added to the tally.

This would prove to be the 'unlucky' 13th try for Wood, because this was the only conversion he missed.

Walker scored his fifth try of the day and in the final ten minutes, Crowhurst and Williamson completed the scoring.

Wood stepped up to put over his 15th conversion, a club record for a game. He also established a new record with his 40 points being the most scored in a match, and of course, the final score was also a record breaker.

The Delves Road team are just two points behind the league leaders. They travel to Kidderminster on January 21.

Walsall United conceded a last minute penalty and lost 18-17 to Sutton Coldfield. Walsall 3rds won their league game against Stone 1st XV 45-22, but Shrewsbury Colts fared better than their senior team, winning their league game against Walsall Colts 17-5.

Alex Reid-y to be next Vardy



Alex Reid shows off his new colours after signing for Fleetwood Town

FORMER Rushall Olympic striker Alex Reid hopes to become the next Jamie Vardy after signing for Fleetwood Town – the club that put the Leicester and England man on the road to stardom.

Reid, aged 20, has found the net on a consistent basis since arriving at the Pics in February 2015, scoring 26 goals in his first full season and 14 this campaign.

The Cod Army is where Vardy caught the attention of the Foxes, moving there for £1million in 2012 and going on to play a key part in their historic Premier League title win.

"Seeing Jamie Vardy and people like (current Fleetwood striker) Ash Hunter and where they

have come from, it just proves it is possible," said Reid, a junior with Villa who also had a spell in Walsall's youth ranks. "Fleetwood showed their interest, I came down and loved everything about it.

"I will work as hard as I can to get to the levels that Jamie Vardy has set for everybody." Rushall Olympic said in a statement: "We thank him for his excellent service with The Pics and wish him well in this new chapter in his football career."

Meanwhile, Pics have signed the experienced Marcus Jackson, who during a previous spell at Dales Lane was named the MFA Kevin Keegan Player of the Year in 2001/02.

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- Four teaching pools
- Brine pool
- Two new 100 station gyms including functional training and free weights areas
- Two fully refurbished gyms
- Three dance studios with full and diverse programmes of fitness classes to suit all ages and abilities
- Two spinning studios
- Professional advice and sessions for medical conditions and healthy weight management

We also have health suites with a mixture of saunas and steam rooms

NO contracts.
NO pushy sales.
NO joining fees.

EASY to join online or at the centres.

For further information or to join visit www.walsall.gov.uk/leisure



New for 2017

Try it, Play it, Love it!



Activities taking place across Walsall Leisure Centres and Parks.

Call Sport and Leisure Development for further details on 01922 658080.

- Couch to 5k Running Groups
- Social Cycling
- No Strings Badminton
- Squash 101
- Touch Tennis
- Adult Swimming Lessons
- Swimfit
- Walking Basketball/ Football/Netball
- Back to Netball
- Just Play Bowls
- Touch Rugby
- Junior, Adult and Wheelchair Basketball
- Volleyball
- Junior Dodgeball
- Young People's Disability Club
- After School Sports Club

Children's parties

Available at all sites, seven days a week (restrictions apply)

Pool and Sports Hall parties are available and have large capacities, so invite the whole class!

Either have one of our party food packages or bring your own.

Pool parties offer 45 minutes exclusive use of a pool followed by an hour for party food.

Sports Hall parties include one hour play in the hall followed by an hour for party food.

Pool inflatables, bouncy castles, party-leaders, sports games are all available on request.

Prices start from just £90.



Swimming lessons

Can your child swim?

Join our swim school to learn this important life skill. Lessons are available seven days a week at all four Leisure Centres.

Complete the swimmer journey and collect the range of badges & certificates from parent and babies to elite medal classes.

Current course runs to the Easter Holidays, £4.50 per half hour lesson.

Armbands and swimming aids provided.

Spaces are available and you can join the current course anytime before 26 February and pay for the remaining lessons.



Move-it discount scheme

£2 Adult Sessions £1 Junior Sessions

Eligibility Criteria:

Low income household, over 60, medical or health condition, full-time students

Registration Fee:

£4 for residents or £10 for non-Walsall residents

Valid:

12 months from date of purchase

All activities are subject to availability – some restrictions may apply please see Terms and Conditions*

Swimming lessons available seven days a week.

ENROLLING NOW!

or telephone **01922 652900**



walsallleisure



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Four Great Leisure Centres for 2017

Bloxwich Active Living Centre
High Street, Bloxwich, WS3 2DA
Tel: 01922 652900

Darlaston Swimming Pool
Victoria Road, Darlaston, WS10 8AP
Tel: 01922 652255

Oak Park Active Living Centre
Coppice Road, Walsall Wood, WS9 9BH
Tel: 01922 652266

Walsall Gala Swimming and Fitness Centre
Tower Street, Walsall, WS1 1DH
Tel: 01922 653150

For more information,
visit the website, give us
a call or pop in for a chat.



A New Year gift from us



Walsall Leisure

**£5
off**
**1st month's
membership**

Available at all sites

Please contact the centre for Terms and Conditions.
Expires 31 March 2017.



Walsall Council

**Free junior
swim**

Subject to pool opening times and
child adult admission policy.
One voucher per child.
Photocopies are not accepted.
Expires 31 March 2017.

**Half price
family swim**
(2 adults and 2 children)

Subject to availability and pool programme.
Child and adult rates.
One voucher per family.
Expires 31 March 2017.

**Half price
badminton
court**

Halls at Bloxwich and Oak Park centres.
Subject to availability. One voucher per person.
Expires 31 March 2017.

**Coffee and
a cake
for £1.50**

Limited to Bloxwich and Oak Park centres.
One voucher per person.
Expires 31 March 2017.



Walsall Leisure



Walsall Council

Leisure Services from Walsall Council